



Designing Interactive Fiction on Episode in Three Phases

Michael Dawson
Episode's Head of Studio



+



Episode

5.5+ million Creators

Episode Originals:
Internal Team

EPISODE STUDIO:

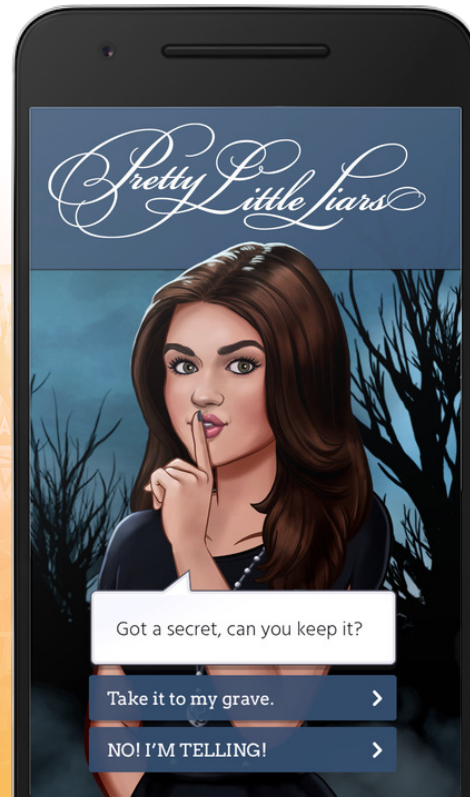


MOBILE

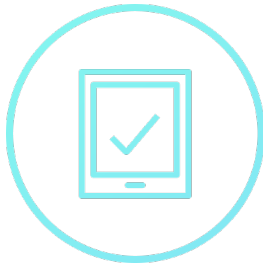


WEB

NETWORK OF 50,000+ STORIES

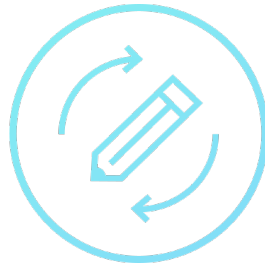


Designing Interactive Fiction on Episode



PHASE 1

Create a Story
that Works on
Mobile



PHASE 2

Iterate Internally



PHASE 3

Iterate with
Viewers

Designing Interactive Fiction on Episode



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Episode's Audience: Women 13-25 on Mobile



14%

Of our users use their phones for 12 hours a day



11%

Of Episode users check their phones in the shower

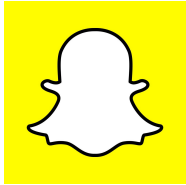


12%

Of people aged 13-17 check their phone every few seconds



Episode's Audience: Wants to Be Active Participants



60%

Used by the Episode audience

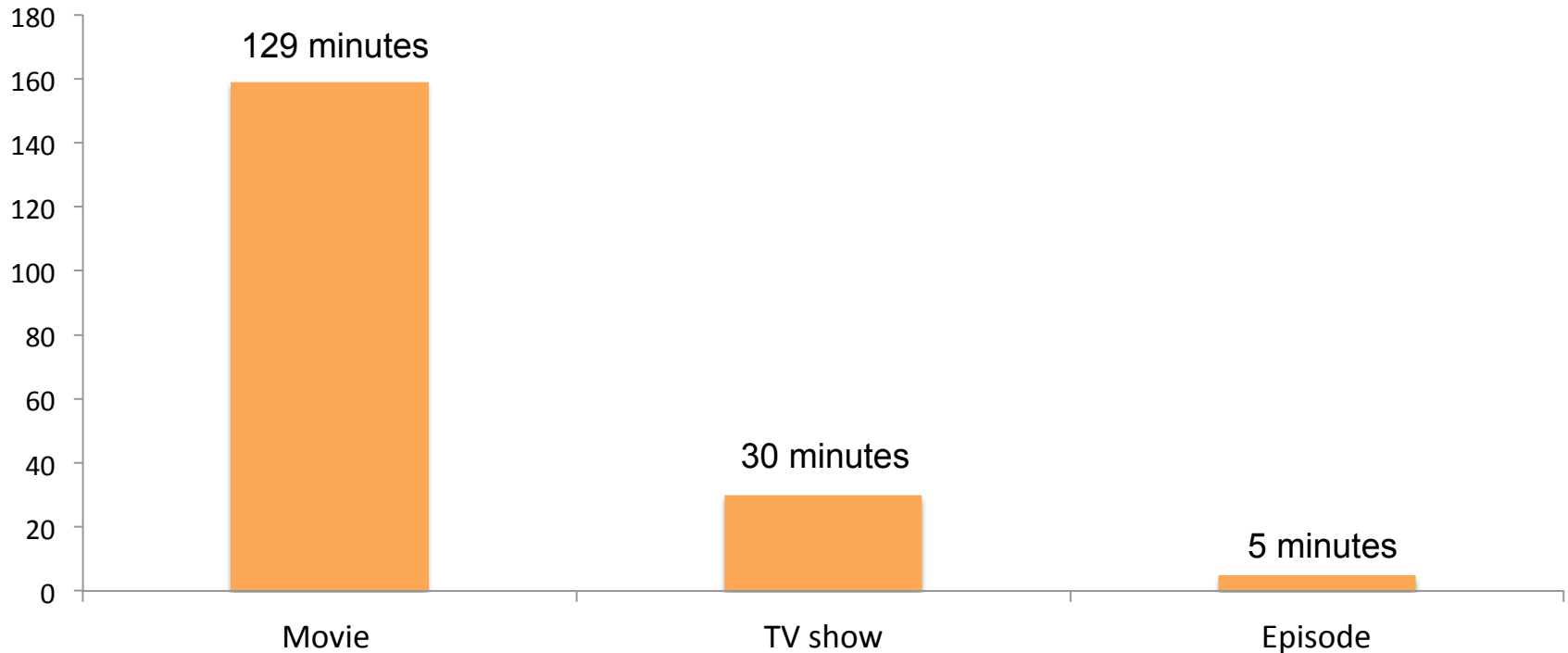


63%

Used by the Episode audience



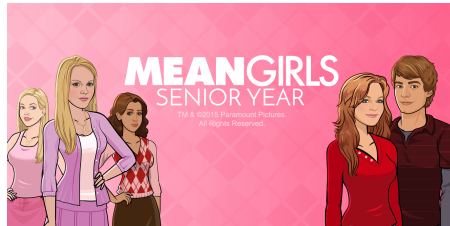
Episode's Audience: Wants Bite-Sized Stories





Pick a Concept that Your Audience will Love

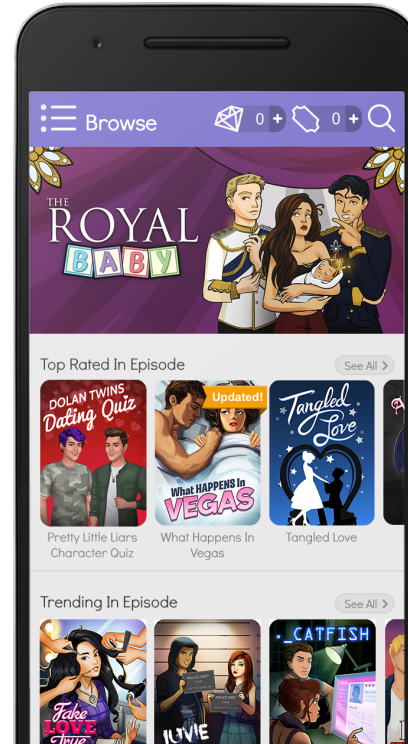
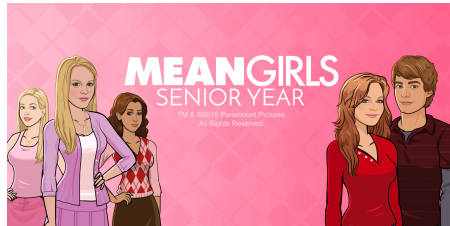
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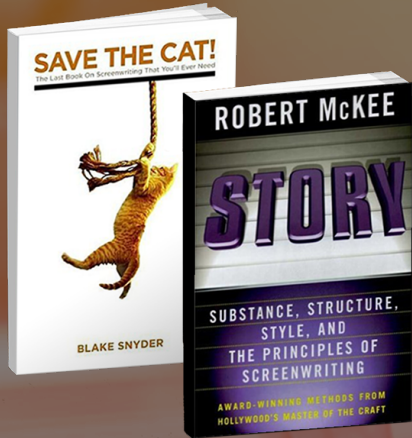
Pick a Concept that Your Audience will Love



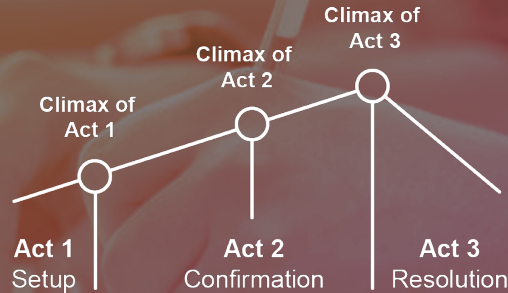
Pick a Concept that Your Audience will Love



Use Best Practices from Hollywood Screenwriting

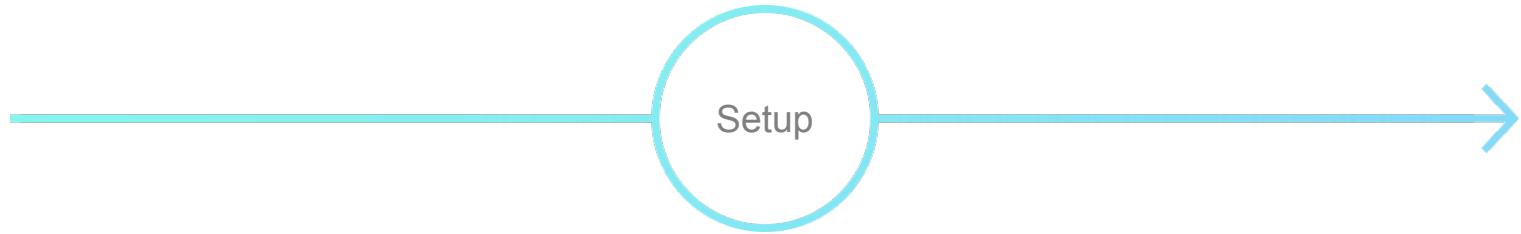


THREE ACT STORY STRUCTURE



Pace your Story for Mobile

First five minutes- movie



First five minutes- Episode



Design in Portrait and with Fewer Characters



Build Interactivity Into Your Story from Day 1

Tessa **CHOOSES**, slight story branch:

If you choose Jay:	If you choose Cole:
Cole says "Figures. Well, it was nice knowing you, shortcake." Tessa's shocked. "Nice knowing me? What's that supposed to mean?"	Jay says, "I knew this was a bad idea. Why'd you make me agree to your stupid rules, Cole?" Tessa's shocked, "What rule, Jay? What are you talking about?"

In either situation, Cole explains that there are rules to this new relationship. No matter which boy she chooses, there are "terms" to the relationship. "Cole/Jay isn't allowed to hang out with you, try to hang out with you, even remotely be near you." Tessa asks the rejected boy, "Are you okay with this? Cuz I'm not. It seems weird." And Jay/Cole *shrug shoulders* "Yeah, it's whatever." **Jay/Cole reason with Tessa: "We talked it over and agreed this was best. Otherwise, we'd just be fighting over you and you'd dump both our asses to the curb."

STORY BRANCH -- extensive "date" or "night on the town" with either Jay or Cole (the dates should reflect the boy she chose; so, more dangerous setting if it's Cole, I'm thinking a late night club or something to that effect, or the dorky town fair if it's Jay). On the date, Tessa asks, "Are you sure we can't all be friends? I feel weird not being able to see Cole/Jay."

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PHASE 3

Iterate with
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Write Scripts, then Get to a Playable ASAP

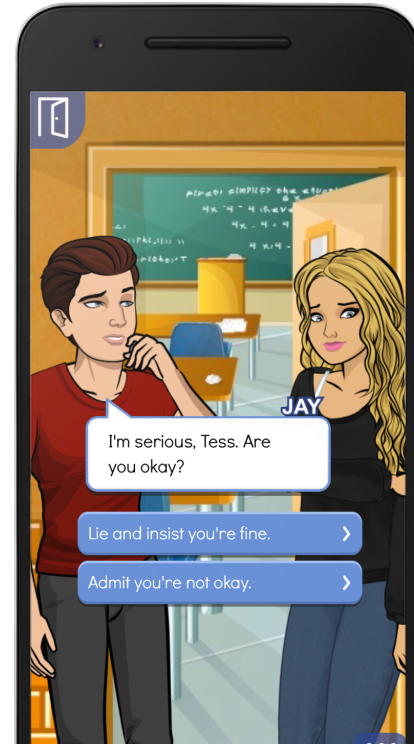
and Tessa watched a movie together, or when Tessa and Cole danced at the pageant). We hear Tessa's V.O. throughout montage, about how much her life has changed since Fatty Tessie. END FLASHBACK, BACK TO TESSA, as the boys ask, "So, who's it gonna be?"

Tessa **CHOOSSES**, slight story branch:

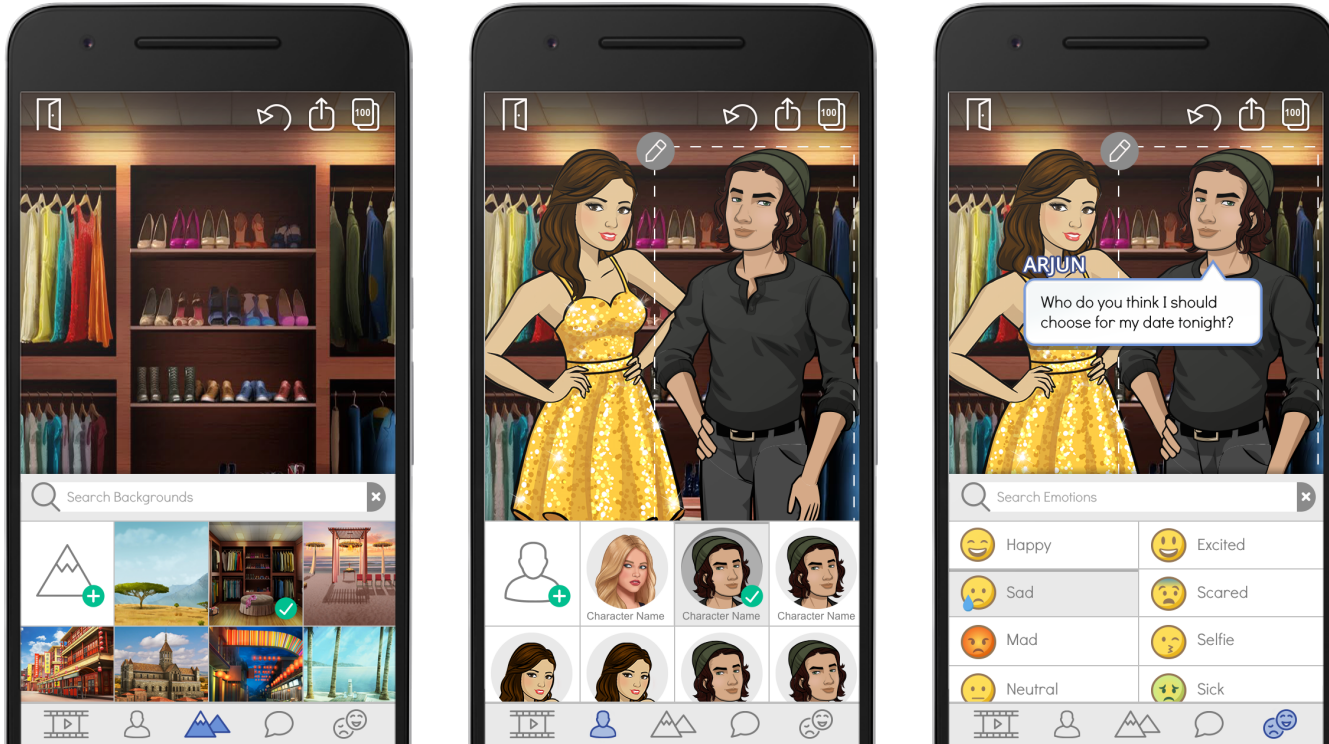
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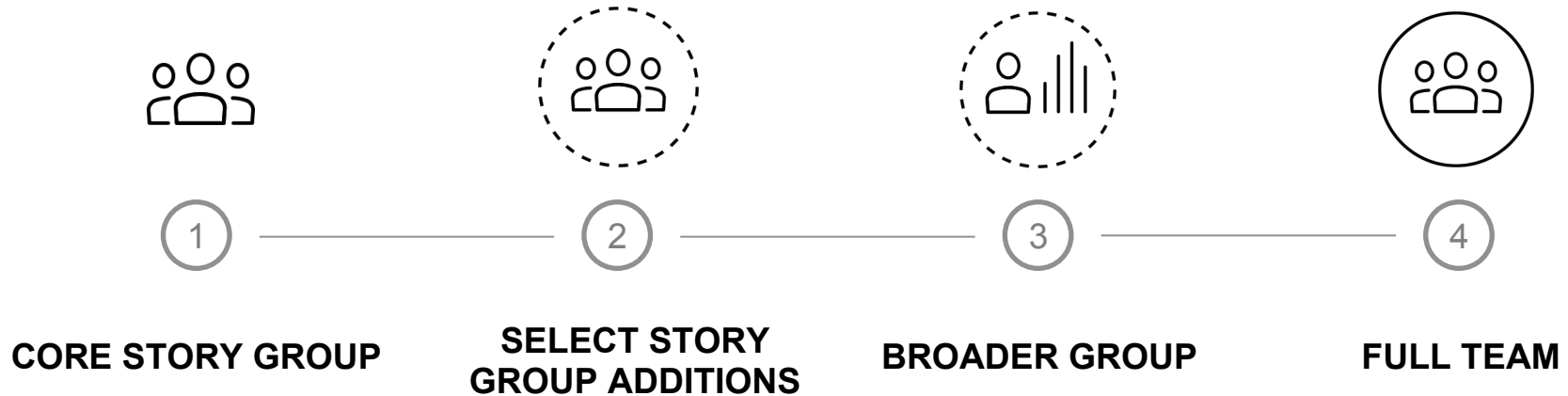
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Use Tools to Get to that Playable Quickly



Story Feedback: Right People, Right Time



Questions to Ask any Reviewer



Does it keep
you engaged at
every tap?



Does it get to
the story fast
enough?



Does it have the
right amount of
agency?

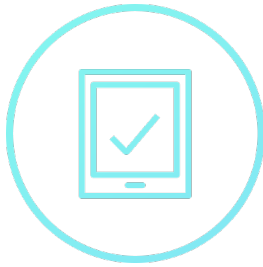


Is the dialogue
working?



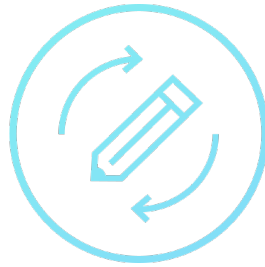
Is it fun?

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PHASE 2

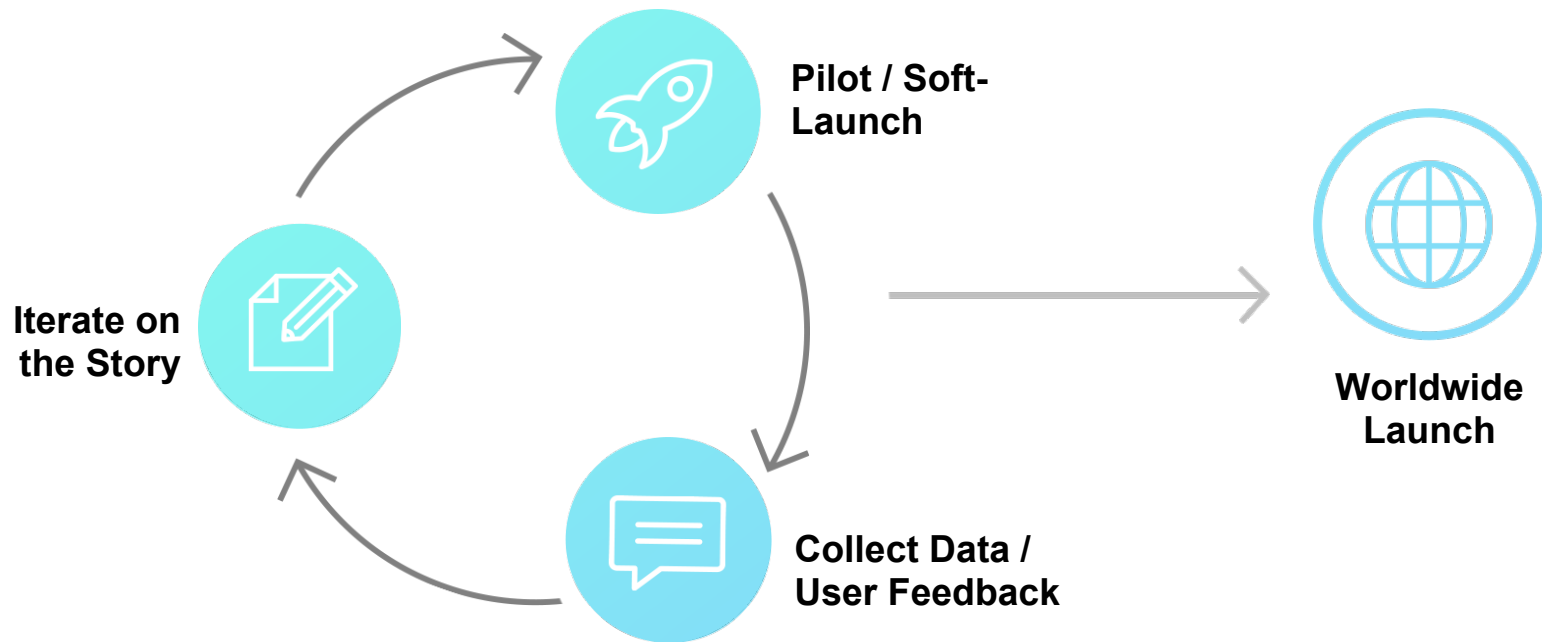
Iterate Internally



PHASE 3

Iterate with
Viewers

Getting to Launch



How We Iterate

- Ratings



4.60



4.59



4.59



4.59



4.57



4.55



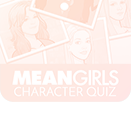
4.43



4.41



4.35

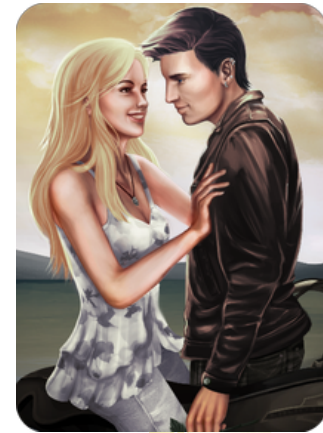


How We Iterate

- Ratings
- Story Starts



32%



34%



37%



42%

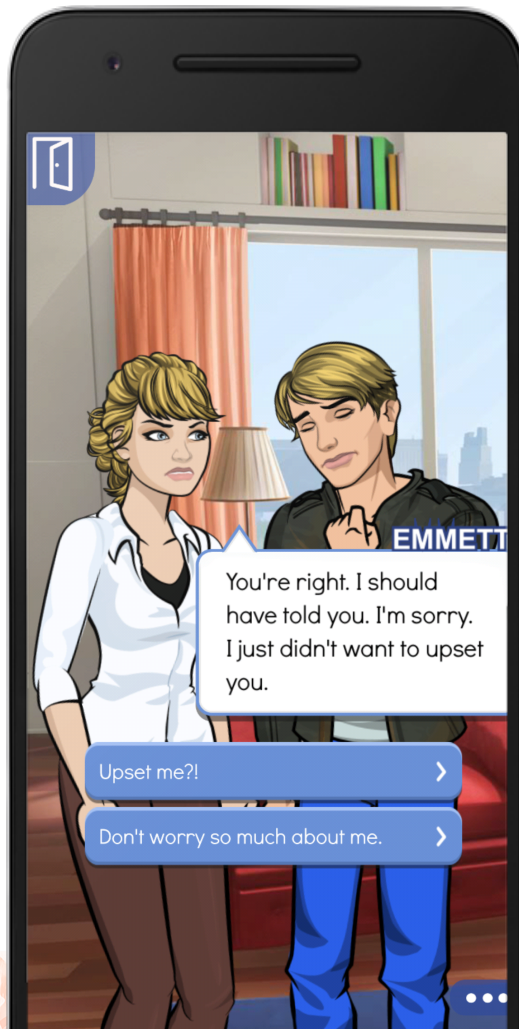


How We Iterate

- Ratings
- Story Starts
- Drop off at individual episodes and scenes

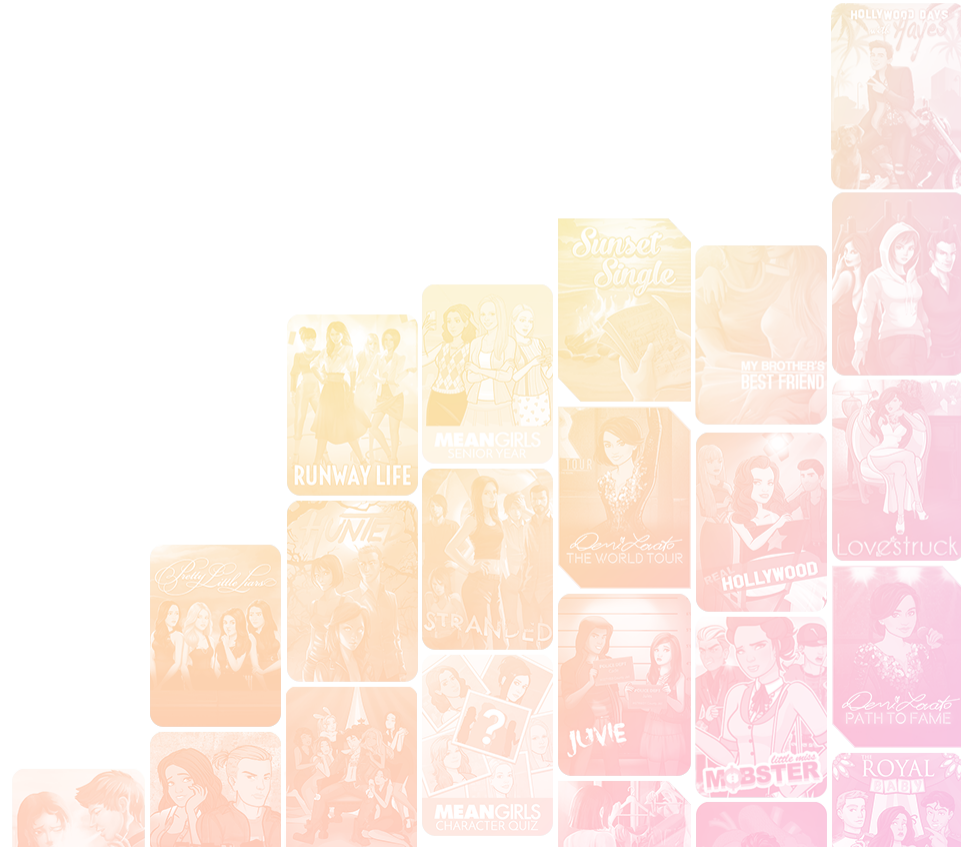
How We Iterate

- Ratings
- Story Starts
- Drop off at individual episodes and scenes
- Choices



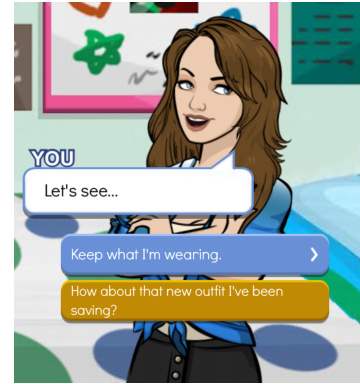
How We Iterate

- Ratings
- Story Starts
- Drop off at individual episodes and scenes
- Choices
- Dollars earned per story start



How We Iterate

- Ratings
- Story Starts
- Drop off at individual episodes and scenes
- Choices
- Dollars earned per story start
- Premium Choices

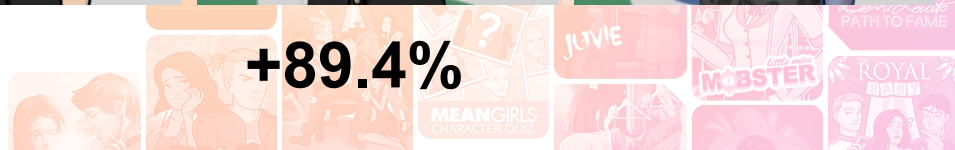


How We Iterate

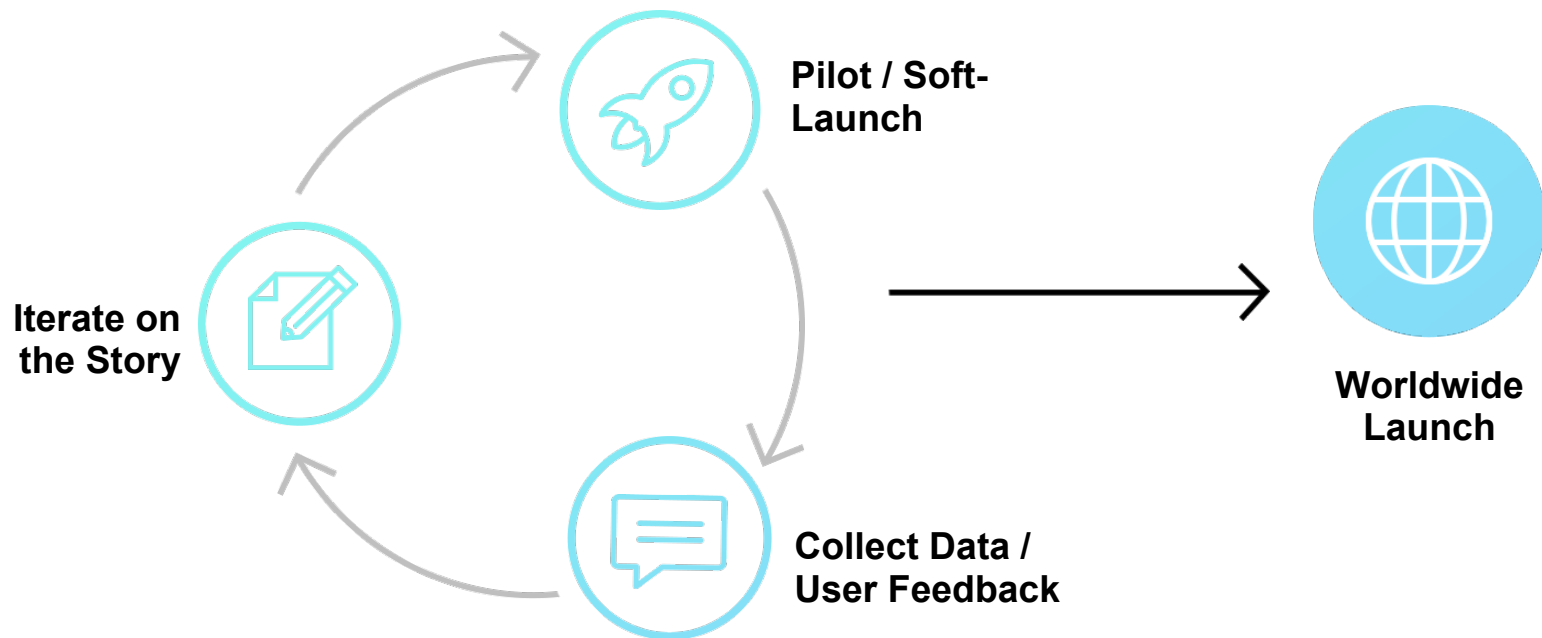
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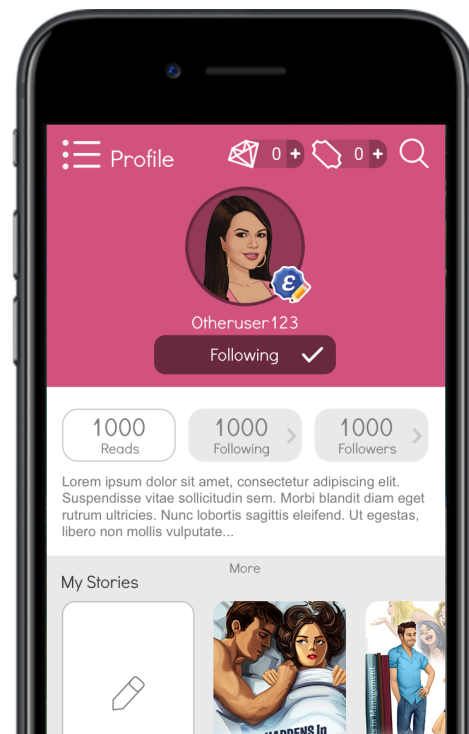
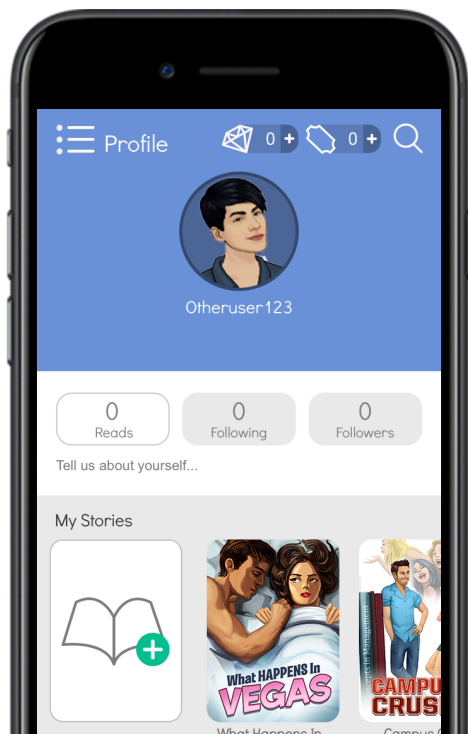
+89.4%



Launch!



Supporting Agency + Identity Across Stories



Summary

- Understand your audience to ensure you pick a concept they will love
- Embrace your medium's pacing, native design, and interactivity while keeping Hollywood screenwriting practices in mind
- Go from script to a build as soon as possible
- Establish the right internal review loops
- Pilot to gather data and feedback
- Iterate, without being afraid to blow up your story



GDC®

Questions?