

MAKING GAMES THAT STAND OUT AND SURVIVE


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GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE

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Who I am

- ◆ Co-founder, CEO Monomi Park
- ◆ Game Director of Slime Rancher
- ◆  @nickpopovich



DISCLAIMER:

- ◆ This talk isn't about how to make a great game.
- ◆ You need a game worth playing for this to matter.
- ◆ This stuff might not fit with your game and that's ok.
- ◆ No one at GDC has all the answers.
- ◆ But I think doing this stuff will help your game succeed.



Major Topics

- ◆ Part 1: Sell It With a GIF
- ◆ Part 2: Staying Relevant
- ◆ Part 3: A Place to Call Home



Major Topics

- ◆ Part 1: Sell It With a GIF
- ◆ Part 2: Staying Relevant
- ◆ Part 3: A Place to Call Home
- ◆ The Gist: This talk is about getting people to notice your game, buy it, and play it (repeatedly)



...BUT FIRST!

Rad Game Factz!



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But why???

Why are you actually competing with all of these games despite the size of your game, genre, etc?

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Because of TIME and ATTENTION.



Takeaway:

Your GAME is what customers buy from YOU.
And TIME is what you buy from THEM.

Your Actual Competition

▶ Everyone else's games

▶ Including Fortnite

▶ Netflix

▶ Youtube

▶ Twitter

▶ Political news

Netflix says Fortnite is bigger competition than HBO or Hulu

36

The company's quarterly report clarifies the 'streaming wars'

By **Matt Patches** | @misterpatches | Jan 17, 2019, 5:20pm EST

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Happy Power/YouTube

Most Read



MAJOR GAMES PUBLISHERS ARE FEELING THE IMPACT OF PEAKING ATTENTION

Posted on 12th February, 2019 by Karol Severin in Games

Just last week (February 5th) Electronic Arts (EA) reported disappointing quarterly results, now Activision has laid off nearly 800 staff, mostly in marketing and sales.

As MIDiA has reported multiple times before, engagement has declined throughout the sector, suggesting that the attention economy has peaked. Consumers simply do not have any more free time to allocate to new attention seeking digital entertainment propositions, which means they have to start prioritising *between* them.

This downward trend in engagement has persisted for a while now, and the latest quarterly results from some major games publishers confirm that a revenue slowdown will ultimately follow consumer behaviour. Arguably sooner than most of the games industry would have thought.

Causes of the Slowdown Go Way Beyond Just Fortnite

Publishers will be quick to blame declining engagement and revenues on Fortnite. While the title indeed intensified the manifestation of the peak attention economy dynamics among gamers, the coming slowdown is part of a much bigger challenge – how to capture attention in an increasingly attention-scarce landscape.

Gamer Behaviour Penetration, Q4 2018, US, UK, Canada, Australia

They are starting to put little trailers of the trailer
you're about to see BEFORE that trailer. It cuts
right to explosions because they know that you
can't even pay attention for 2 whole minutes now.
It haunts me that maybe our brains are broken.

Avg Day of US Adult in 2018

- ▶ 4 hrs phone/tablet
- ▶ 4 hrs live tv
- ▶ 6.8 hrs sleeping
- ▶ 8+ hrs at work (weekdays)
- ▶ Check phone 85 times
- ▶ Eating? Commuting?

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= 2 free hrs weekdays, 10 weekends

*Sell it
with a*

GIF



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GIFs are GOOD.

- They communicate things quickly
- They're a form of artistic expression
- They're mobile-friendly and easily sharable, especially on Twitter



DID YOU KNOW???

Twitter users are 31% more likely to remember content vs other online platforms.

But this part of the talk isn't about
social media best practices.

Takeaway:

Can your GAME DESIGN fit inside a GLF?

What do you mean, Stranger?

- Can you present your core gameplay loop in a GIF?
- Can you show the 'killer app' of your game in a GIF?
- Can you teach someone to play your game in a GIF?
- Basically, can I 'get' your game in a single GIF?

grok

/gräk/ 

verb

INFORMAL • US

understand (something) intuitively or by empathy.

"because of all the commercials, children grok things immediately"

- empathize or communicate sympathetically; establish a rapport.

Takeaway:

What do you want the player to feel?

Why this is important

- Everyone is distracted all the time
- We have finite time and energy to care about new things
- The more time and energy required, the harder the sell

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So... reduce time-to-grok as much as possible!

Spelunky



Superhot



Rocket League



Human Fall Flat



Subnautica



Factorio



They Are Billions



Monster Hunter




Slime Rancher



Baba Is You

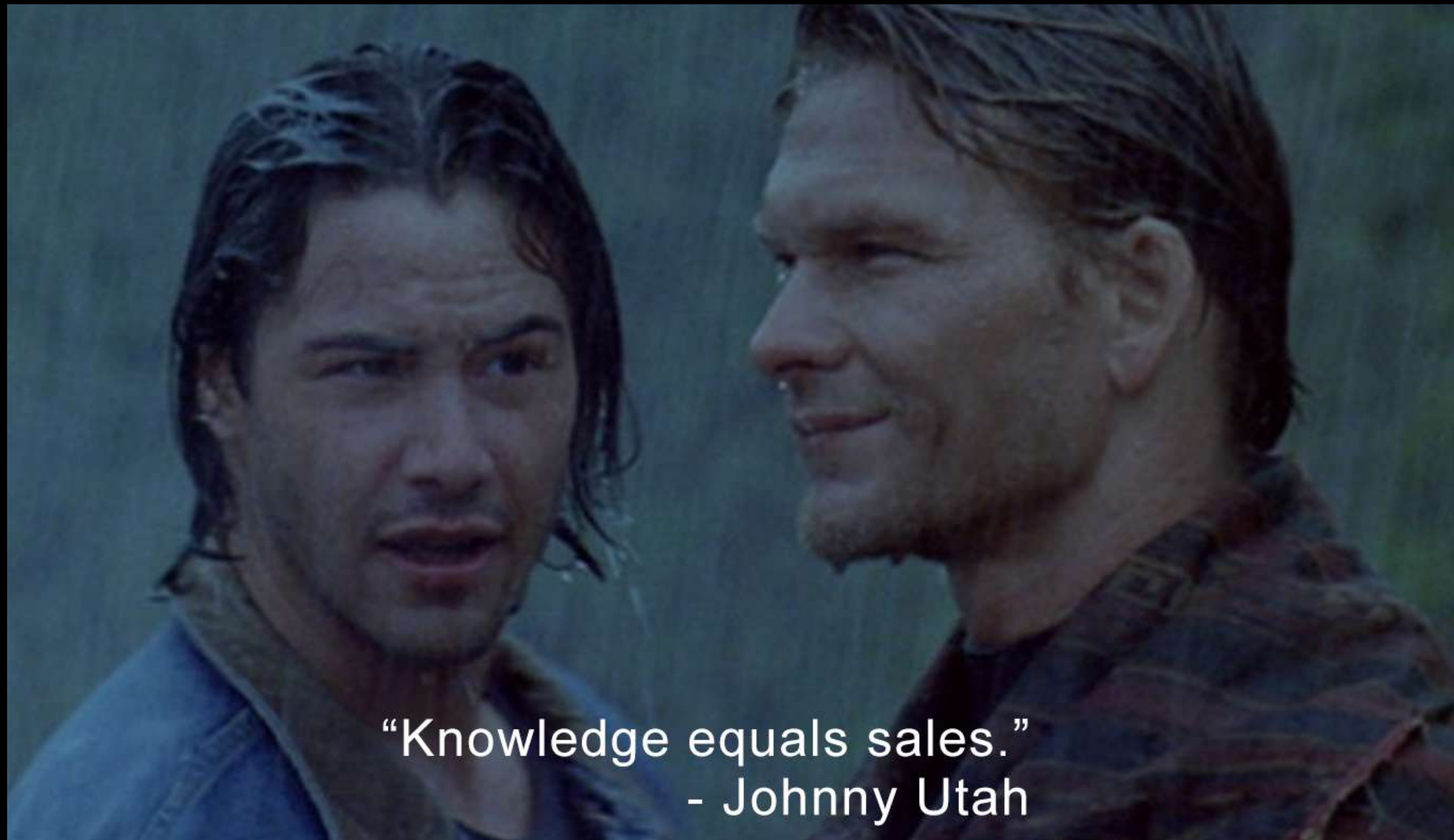




“Plenty of best-selling games don’t do this.”
- The Devil, Al Pacino

In Summary:

- Your customers have finite time and are highly distracted
- So make a game that customers don't have to work to understand
- Make a game that sells itself in the span of a GLF



“Knowledge equals sales.”
- Johnny Utah

Staying Relevant



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What is Staying Relevant?

- ✧ Having new content to play over time
- ✧ Remaining community-relevant over time
- ✧ Remaining streamer-relevant over time
- ✧ The Goal: Continuing to sell over time

Takeaway:

Your game needs a pulse to survive.

Keeping the Pulse

- ✕ Content updates from you
- ✕ Content creation from your community
- ✕ Community scene / competition
- ✕ Multiplayer / sharing
- ✕ Porting to other platforms
- ✕ Community engagement

But Why?

- ✧ Long-term support of a game is becoming expected
- ✧ Supporting a released game is easier and less risky than building a new one
- ✧ Remember: Concurrency is king

How Does it Lead to Sales?

- ✧ Viral mechanisms: Steam, PS4, Xbox
- ✧ Wishlist conversions and gifting from sales
- ✧ People are busy and distracted, but maybe not later
- ✧ Joining the bandwagon / discussion

In Summary:

- ✧ Your game is a garden. Nurture it.
- ✧ Stay relevant by doing things that give your game a pulse
- ✧ Keeping a pulse keeps you selling.



A PLACE TO CALL

HOME

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Have you ever sat down to play games and not chosen a specific one because...

- ◆ You can't recall where you left off?
- ◆ The game is stressful or difficult and you're looking to relax?
- ◆ You know you will need to find a group (multiplayer)?
- ◆ You remembered you were stuck on something?



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FRICTION

■ You want you will need to find a group (multiplayer)?

■ You remembered you were stuck on something?




Takeaway:

Friction kills.



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So... give your game a place to call Home.



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What is Home?

Any environment, mode or activity in a game that allows for relaxed, low-consequence play but still issues meaningful rewards or progress.



Destiny: Running patrols and bounties



Fortnite: Focusing on Battle Pass objectives

2

V 700

LOBBYBATTLE PASSCHALLENGESEVENTSLOCKERITEM SHOPCAREERSTORE

TIER 31

0 / 10

32

SEASON 7

SEASON ENDS: 83 Days

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	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87

PURCHASE TIER

Get Tier 32 rewards now!
Your current progress will be applied to the next tier.

EPIC | OUTFIT

ONESIE

Smash that snooze button.
Part of the **Durrr Burger** set.

Hold to chat

Zoom

Rotate Item

About Battle Pass (Hold)

Replay Cinematic

Mario Odyssey: Collecting moons from past levels



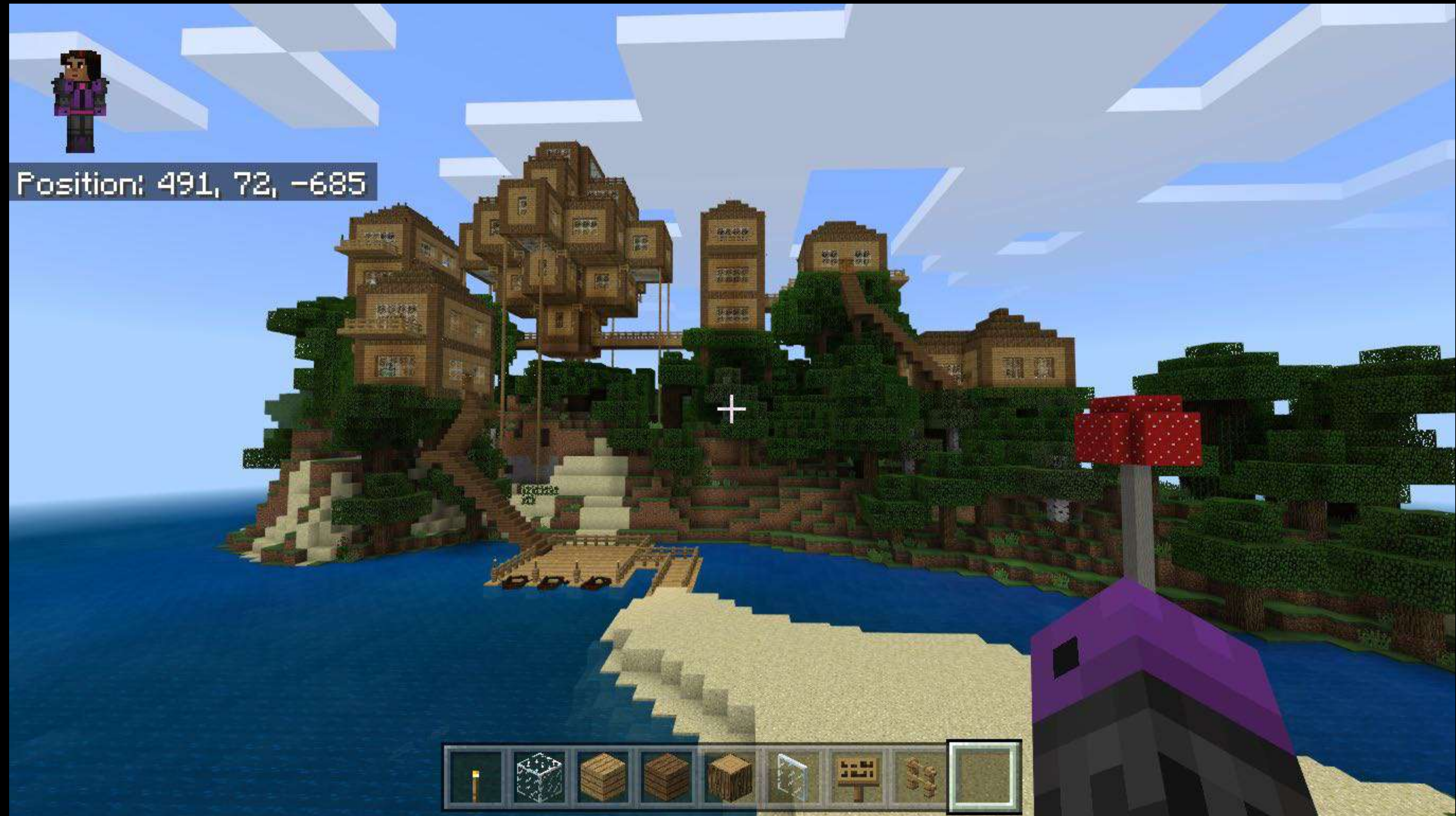
MMOs: Daily quests



Spider-Man: Swinging through the city



Minecraft, etc: Gathering for projects, building them



Zelda BotW: Wandering over the next horizon, shrines



Slime Rancher: Tending to your ranch, wandering

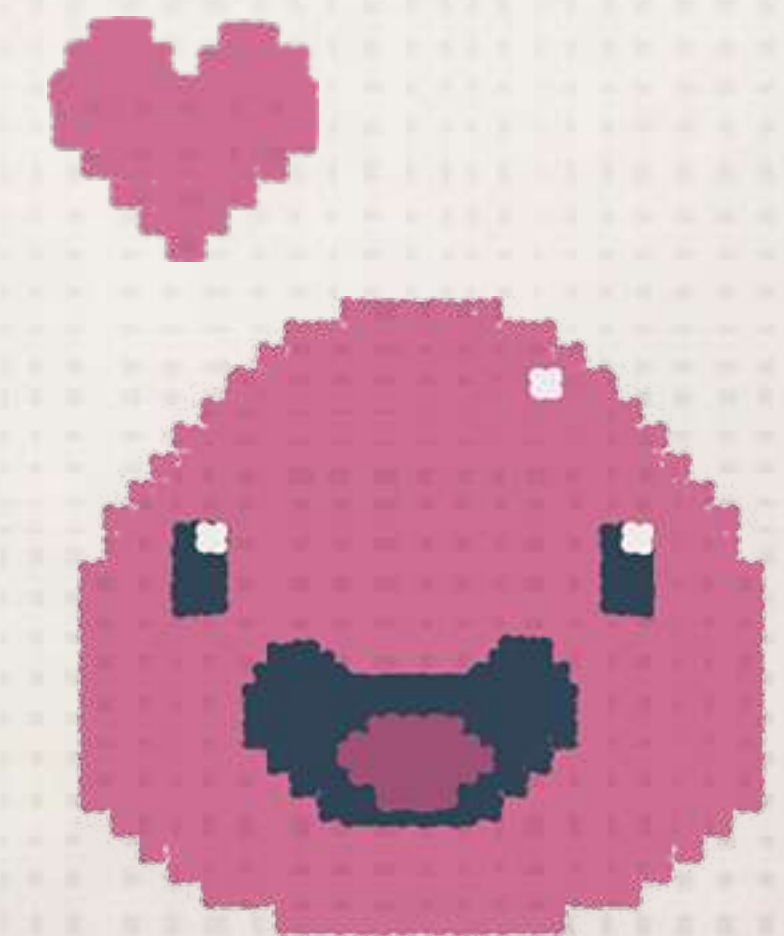


Dark Souls: Doesn't really have Home, but...



Why do Players Respond to Home?

- ◆ Games are recreational and Home allows you to relax
- ◆ We're accustomed to visiting platforms, and then exploring for content: Steam, Netflix, Twitter, etc
- ◆ There is always some amount of anxiety around PvP, teamplay, spending currencies, ranked play, etc
- ◆ Home gives you a starting point, and a go-to during any play session



Why is Home Good for Business?

- ◆ Selling a copy of your game isn't enough
- ◆ Players playing your game over time increases sales
- ◆ Home gets players into your game
- ◆ Home increases overall playtime because lack of friction



Now you wait just a dang minute,
podium guy...

Isn't some of the stuff in this talk
the kind of strategy used by...



GAMES AS A SERVICE?!?!?



Yes. And that's ok.

Slime Rancher

- ★ Single-player, offline, indie game
- ★ Released over 3 yrs ago
- ★ Original dev team was 3 people
- ★ It is not a typical GaaS genre



Slime Rancher

- ★ Received 18 significant updates so far
- ★ Has weekly and holiday activities, and community contests
- ★ Is still being ported to new platforms
- ★ Has maintained strong revenue since release (Dec 2018 best month ever)



It Does the Things

- ★ It sells itself in a GIF
- ★ It has maintained relevancy by nurturing the game since release
- ★ It has copious amounts of Home



BUT...

It also does other things NOT
covered in this talk.

And it also DOESN'T do lots of
things that make other games
successful.

So remember...

Instead, take stuff from this talk,
and everyone else's talks that
make sense to you, and make your
own path to success.

The stuff in this talk will help your
game succeed. But it is not the
only path to success.



Good Luck!

Thank You!

Special thanks to:

- ▶ Ray Bruwelheide for the slide art
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- ▶ Everyone at Monomi Park and Keanu

