GDC

BEYOND TEST SERVERS

How For Honor Made Testing a Celebrated Player Experience

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UBISOFT

FOR
HONOR

HOW ARE WE GOING TO
HANDLE BALANCE?

/ WHAT IS BALANCE

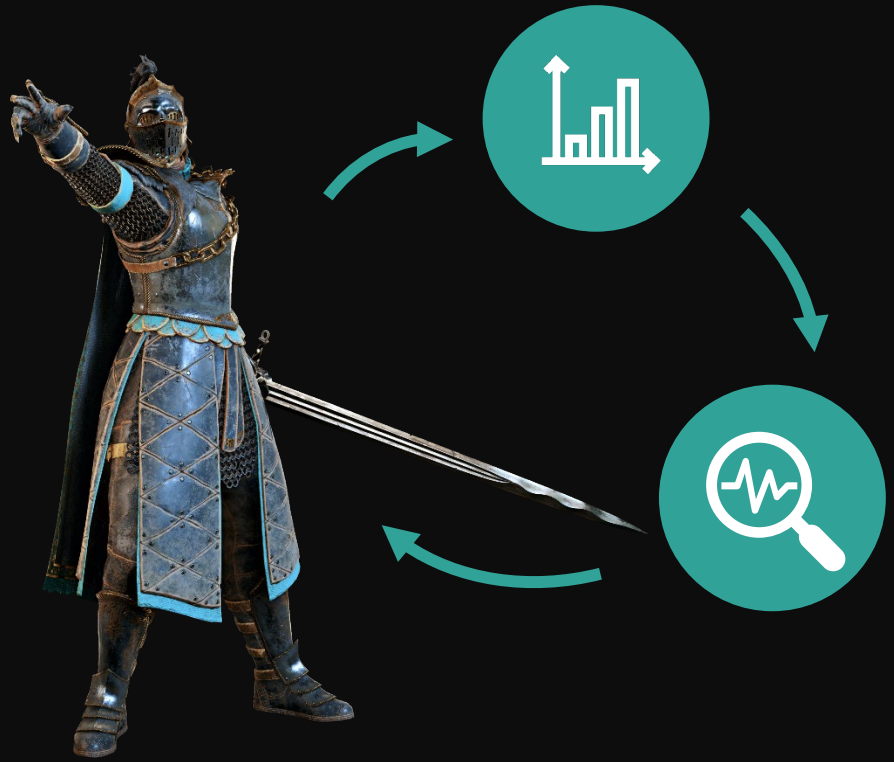
FAIRNESS

/ WHAT IS BALANCE

NEED A TOOL

/ REACTION FRAMEWORK

/ ITERATION TOOL



TEST SERVERS

/ IT WENT WRONG…

Balance & Tourneys

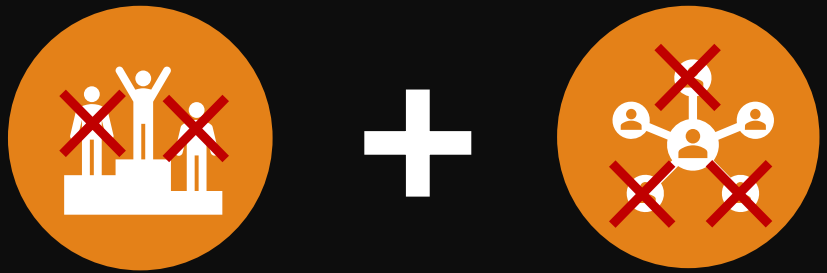
Fight Meta

Balance & Game Mode

Breach Game Mode

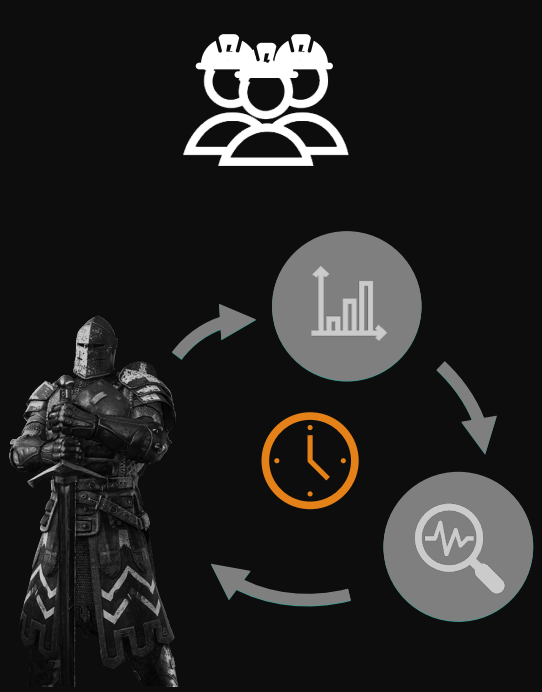
1.6%

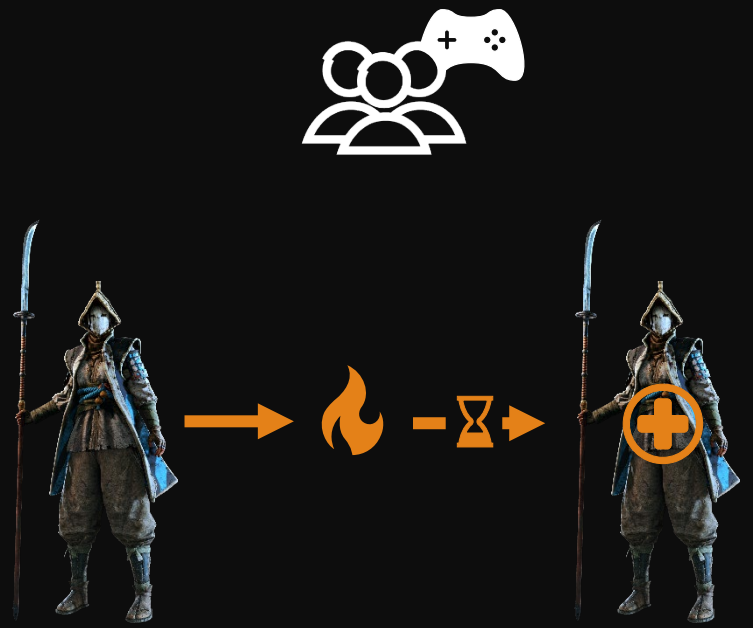
/ IT WENT WRONG…



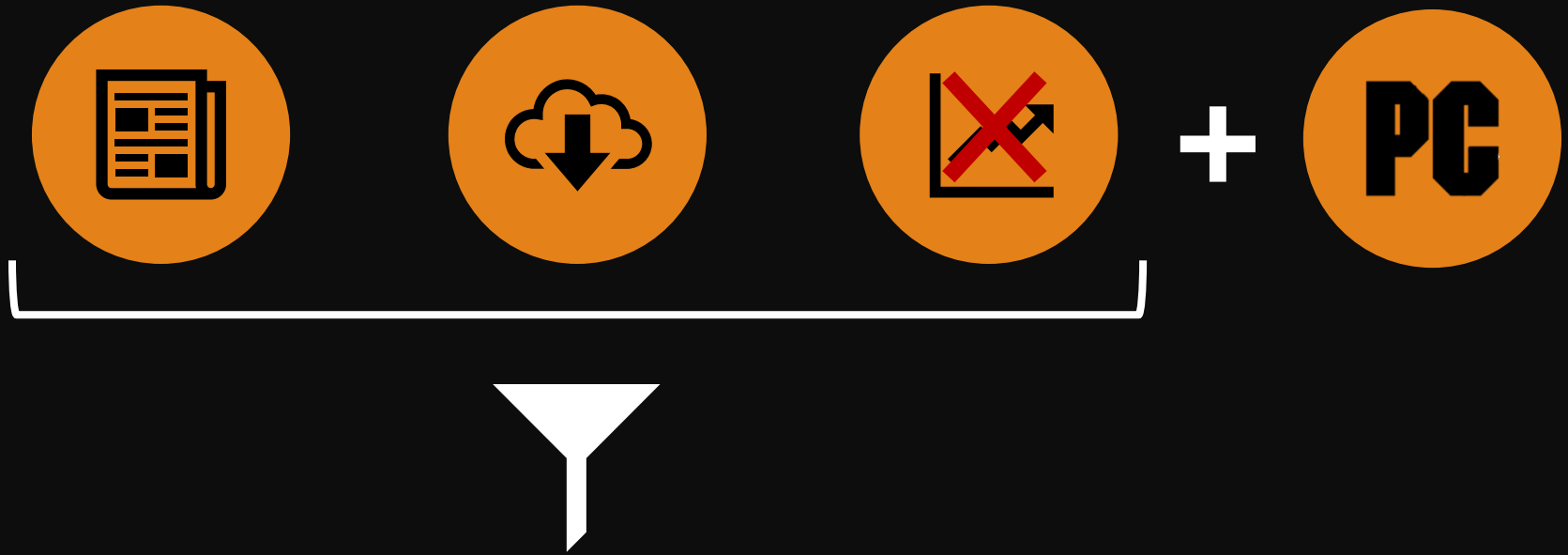
= NO DATA

/ LOSE-LOSE

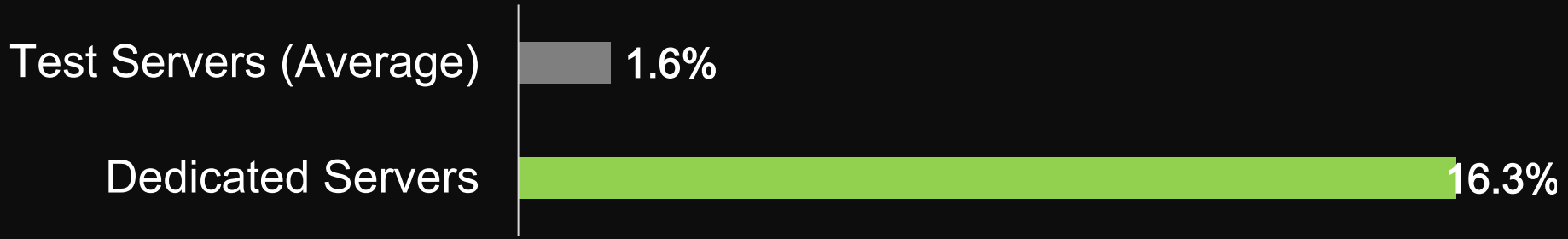




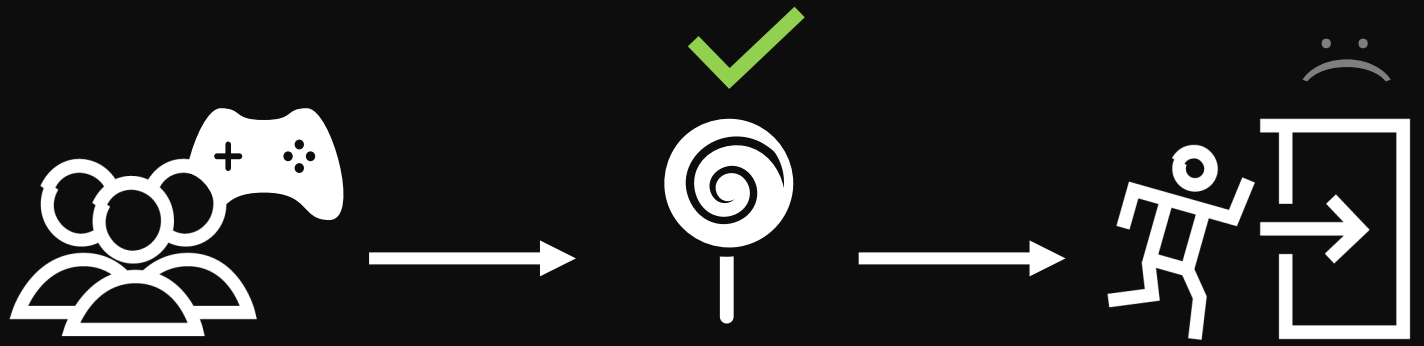
/ ATTENDANCE BARRIERS



/ BETTER TEST SERVERS?



/ YES BUT…



MITIGATED SUCCESS

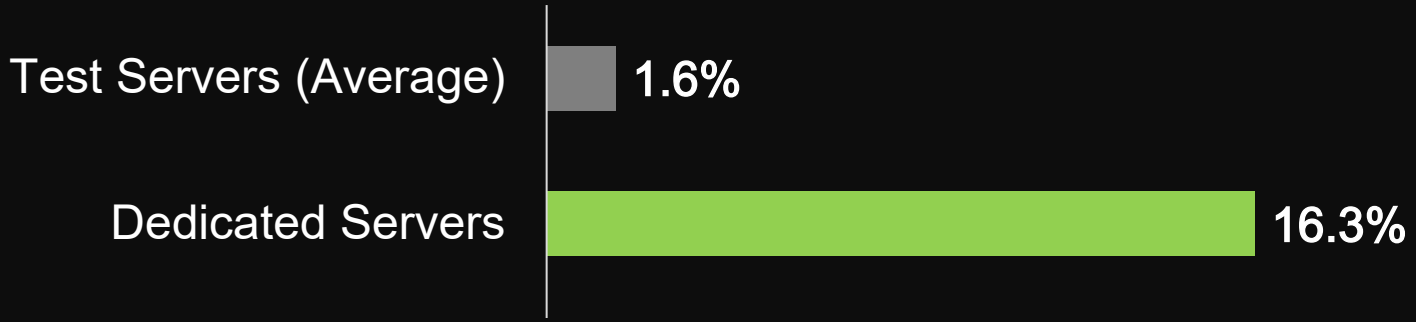
/ HOW CAN WE DO EVEN BETTER?

= GAME TESTING GROUNDS

F2
5
Off-Season
Last Season:
+2
20
-3
32
+1
35
Next Battle: 05:31:59
BATTLE
BREACH
TESTING GROUNDS
F3 WAR MAP
F1 QUICKMATCH
ESC BACK

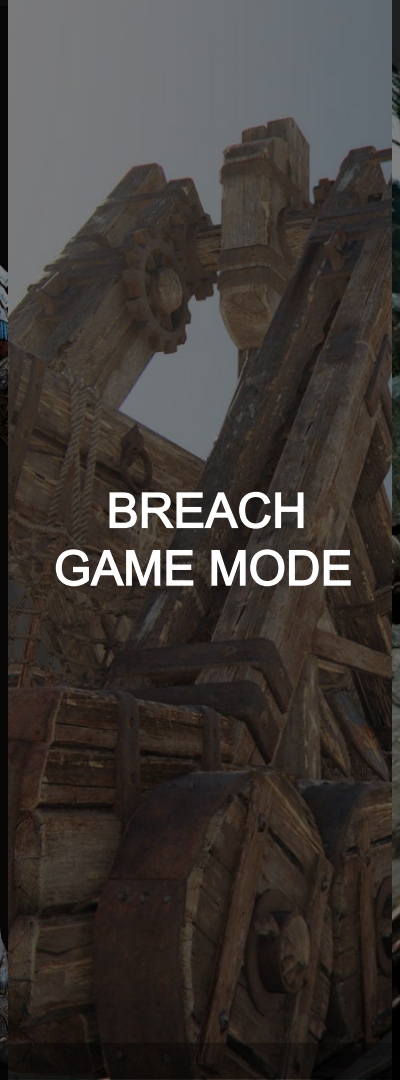
F2
5
Off-Season
Last Season:
+2
20
-3
32
+1
35
Next Battle: 05:31:59
BATTLE
BREACH
TESTING GROUNDS
F3 WAR MAP
F1 QUICKMATCH
ESC BACK

/ CENTURION TESTING GROUNDS



SUCCESS!!!!

CENTURION


BREACH
GAME MODE

CORE
SYSTEMS

4
CHARACTERS

7
CHARACTERS

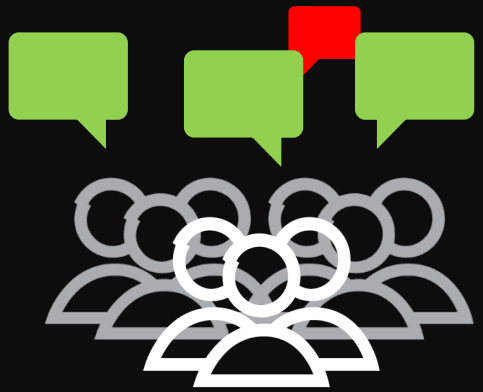
/ WAS IT JUST A FLUKE?

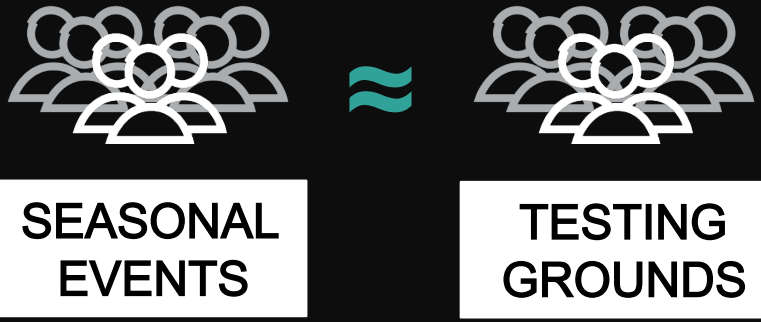
24%

/ OBVIOUS BENEFIT: ITERATION

/ OBVIOUS BENEFIT: ITERATION

/ UNFORESEEN BENEFIT





FOR HONOR ROADMAP

MARCH - APRIL - MAY

LEGEND | TESTING GROUNDS | SEASONAL EVENT | EVENT PLAYLIST | NEW CONTENT OF THE WEEK | EVENT ORDER / FESTS | FREE EVENT PASS | WEEKLY ARCADE QUEST *

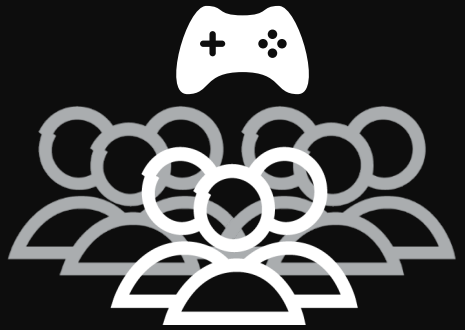
/FORHONORGAME /FORHONOR

*AVAILABLE FOR MARCHING FIRE OWNERS ONLY

/ AND THIS IS WHY IT WORKED

TEST SERVERS

/ PLAYERS MUST BE PART OF THE JOURNEY



TRUST

TEST SERVERS

1.6%

TESTING GROUNDS

24%

/ HINDSIGHT IS 20/20

WE WERE SCARED

WHY WERE WE SCARED
TO DO TESTING GROUND?

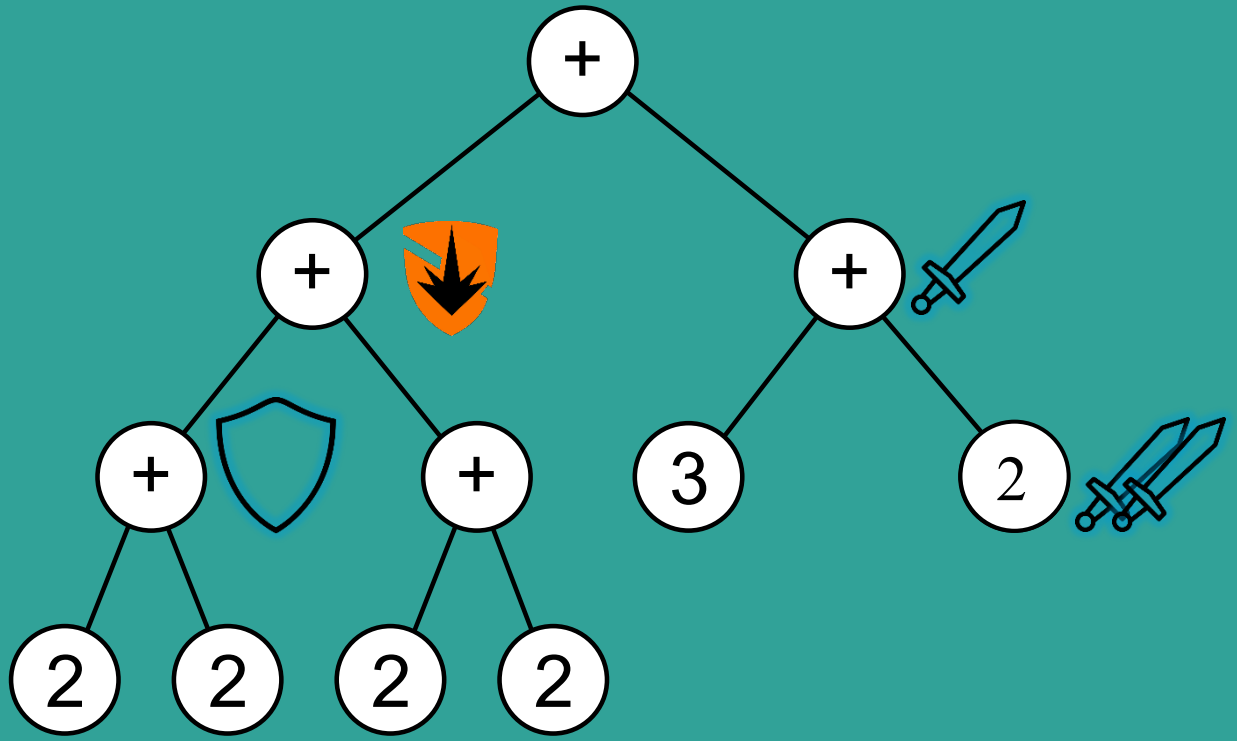
FEAR OF TECH COMPLEXITY

“It’ll never work!”

IMPOSSIBLE WHY?

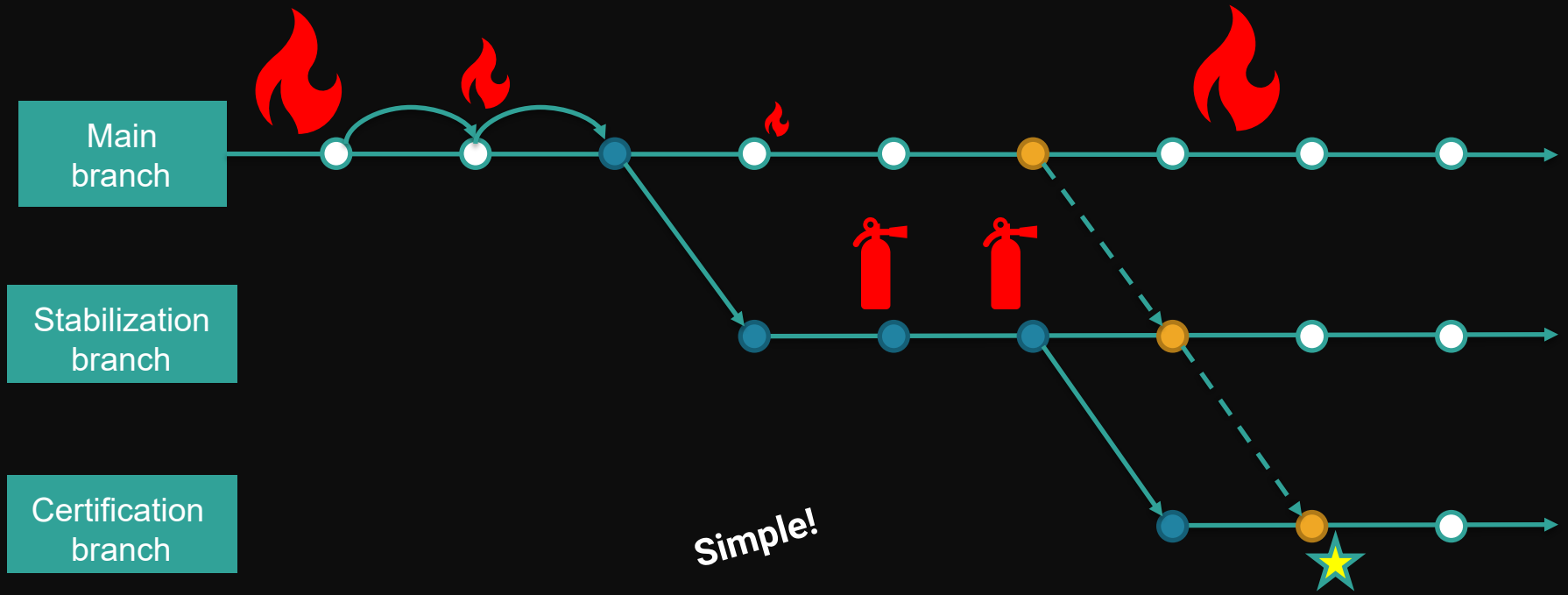
FIRST, LET'S SEE WHERE THE FIGHT CHANGES ARE

/ MOVE SET

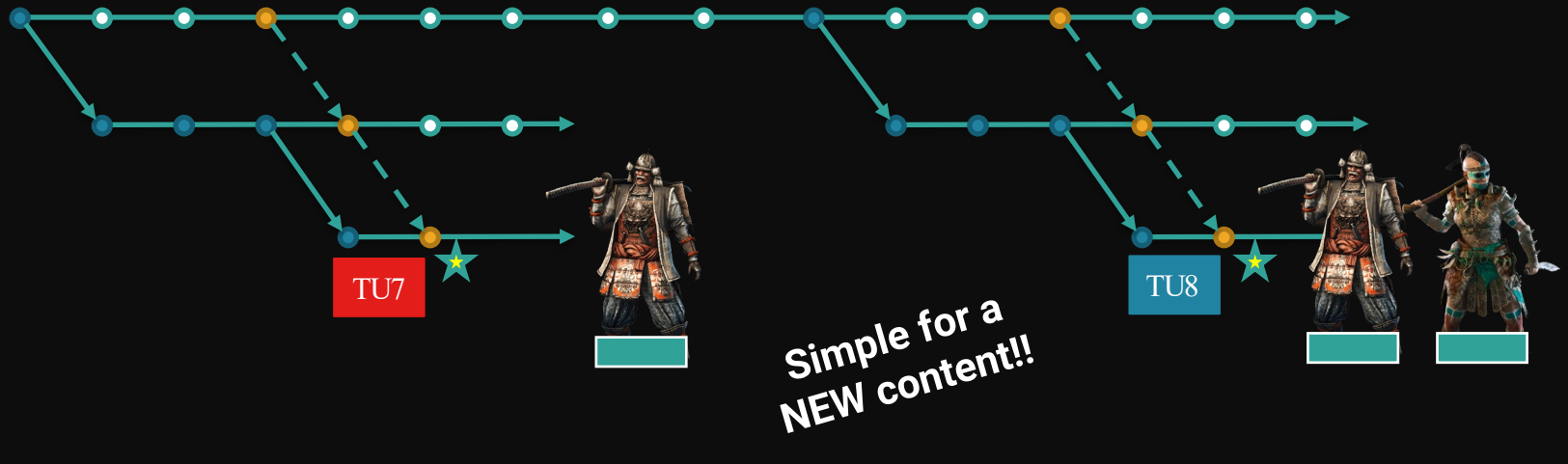


Code & Data

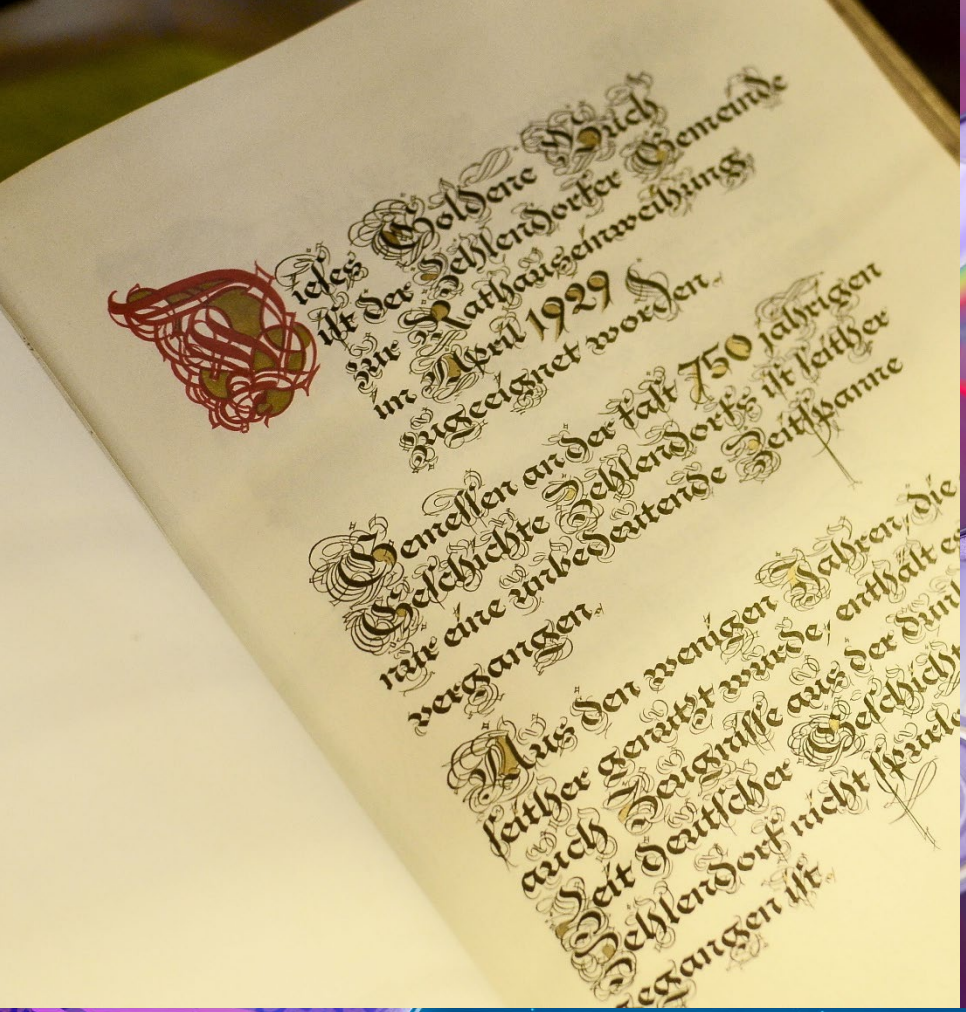
/ RELEASING FROM THE MAIN BRANCH



/ UPCOMING CONTENT IS TAGGED AND REMOVED



TU = Title Update



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BRANCHES?

OR

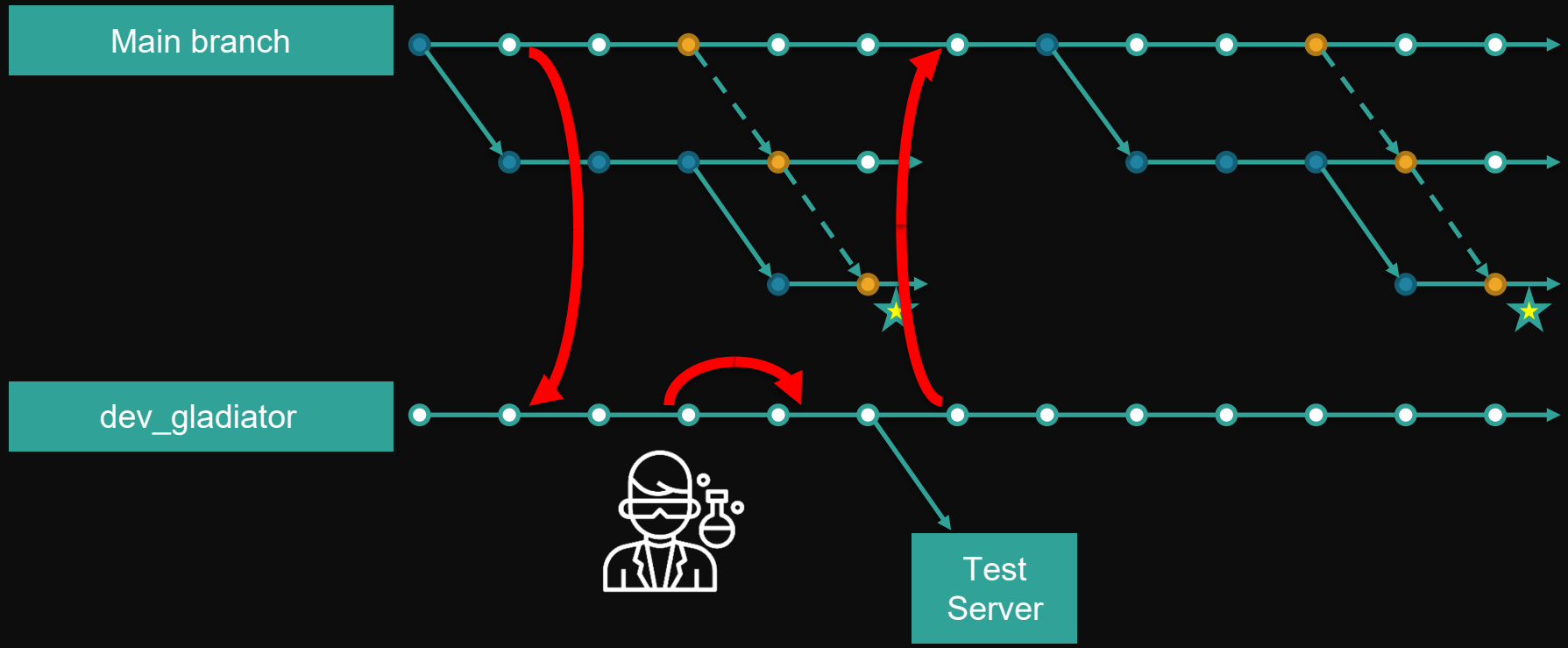
FEATURE SWITCHES?

CON: ¯_(ツ)_/¯

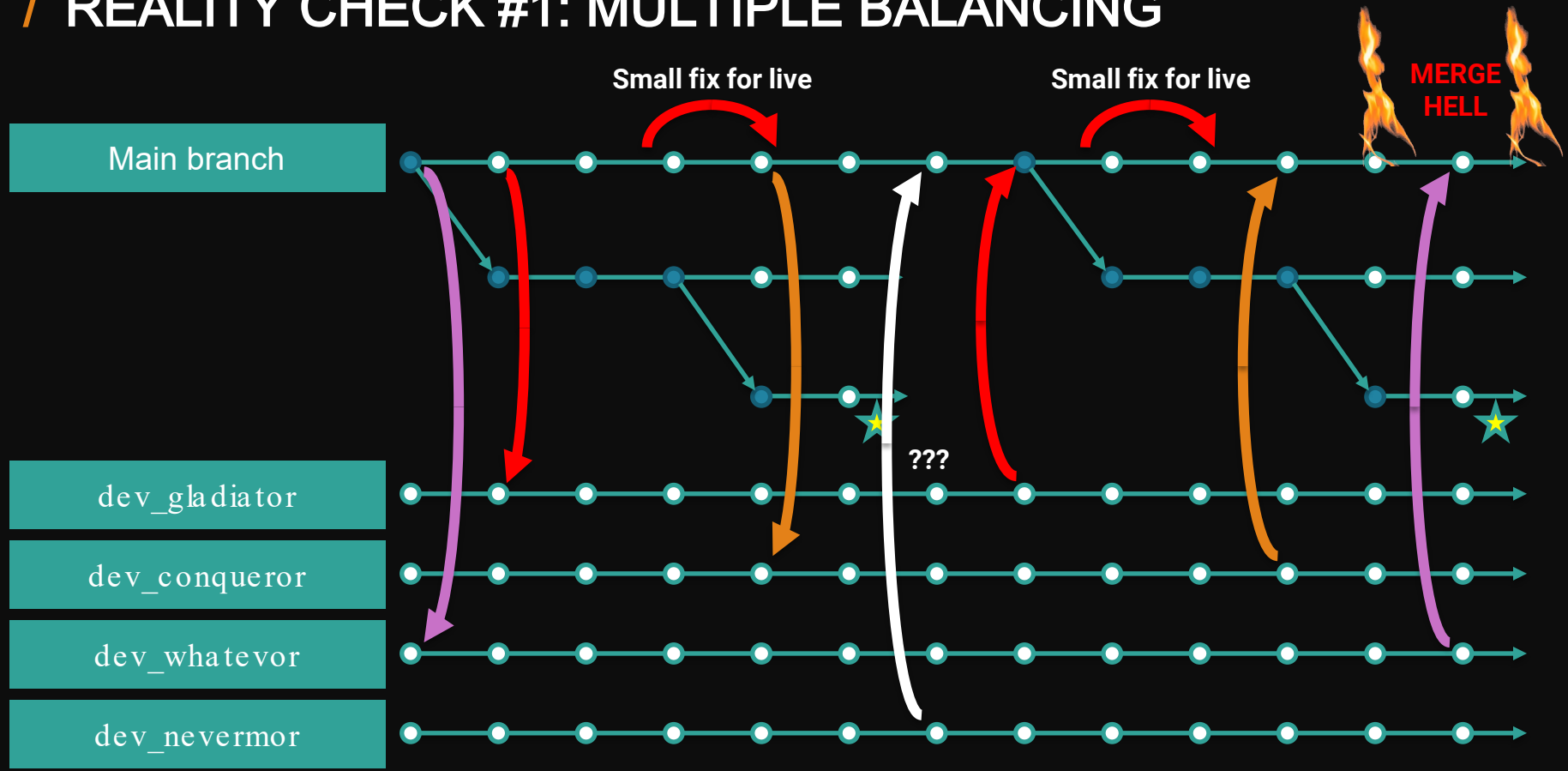
CON: IMPOSSIBLE

BRANCHES
TEST SERVERS
EASY

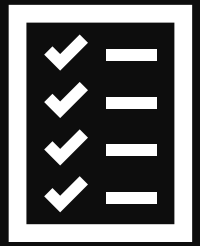
/ BALANCING IN THEORY

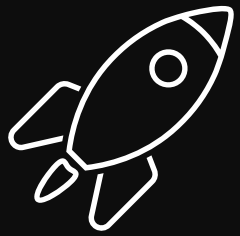


/ REALITY CHECK #1: MULTIPLE BALANCING



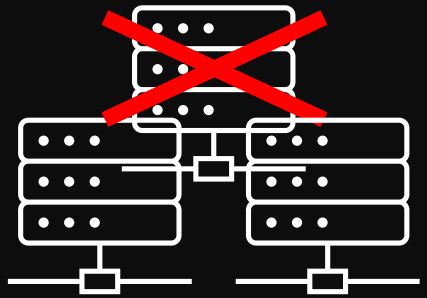
/ REALITY CHECK #2: TEST SERVER DEPLOYMENT





TEST SERVERS
ARE NOT EASY

/ TO BE EFFICIENT AT BALANCING, WE WANTED TO



BRANCHES

OR

FEATURE SWITCHES

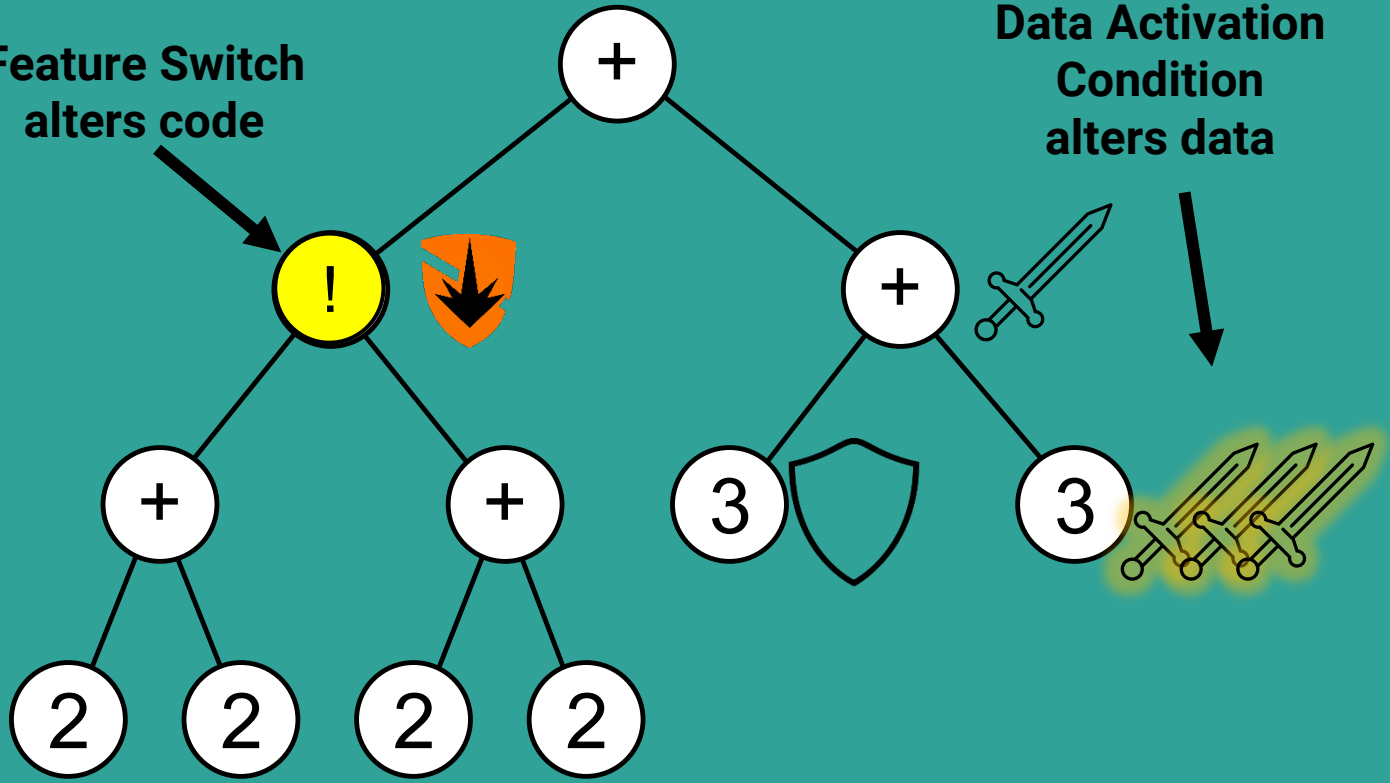
HOW TO DO
FEATURE
SWITCHES THEN?

/ ADDRESSING THE FEAR: TECH WORK AMOUNT

```
warden.Rework = true;
```

Feature Switch alters code

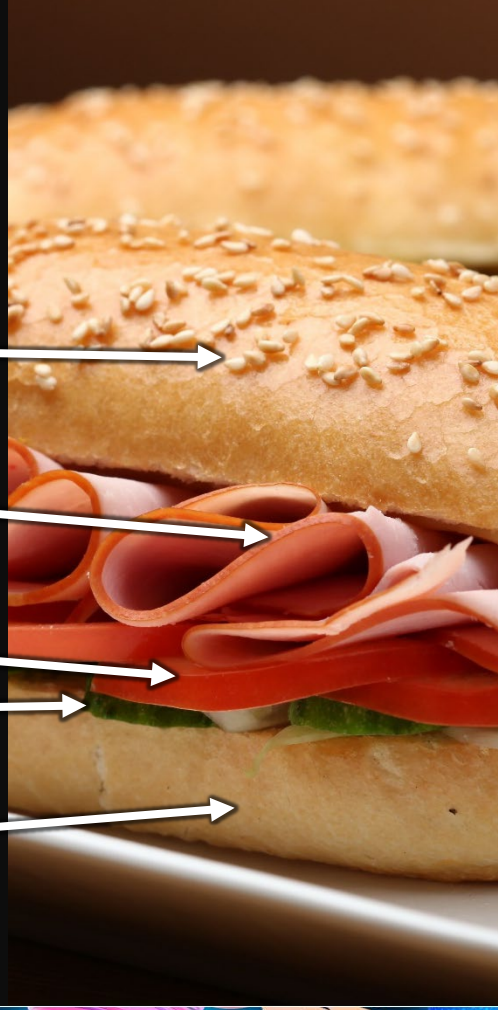
Data Activation Condition alters data



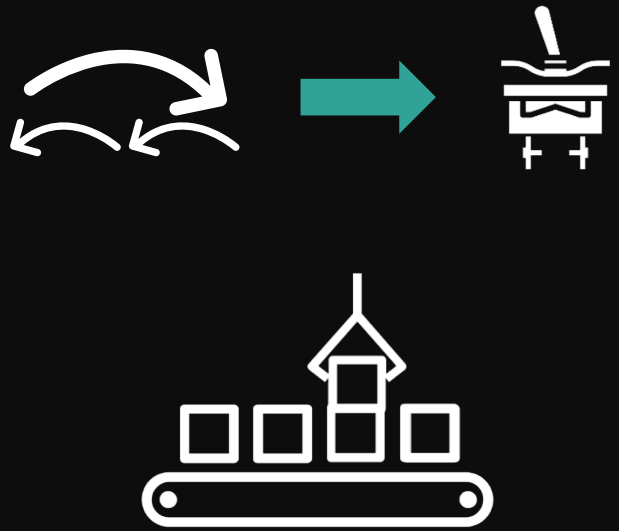
/ ADDRESSING THE FEAR: INSTABILITY

SWITCHES SANDWICH

5. LiveOps workflow
4. Data activation conditions
   (Secret sauce)
3. Online override
2. Local overrides
1. Engine feature switches with defaults



/ ADDRESSING THE FEAR: WORKFLOW



/ DEV TEAM- FIRST YEAR LIVE

/ DEV TEAM- NOW

Small fix for live

Balancing switch

Rework switch

Small fix for live

New mechanic switch

Main branch

Live game

Testing Grounds 1

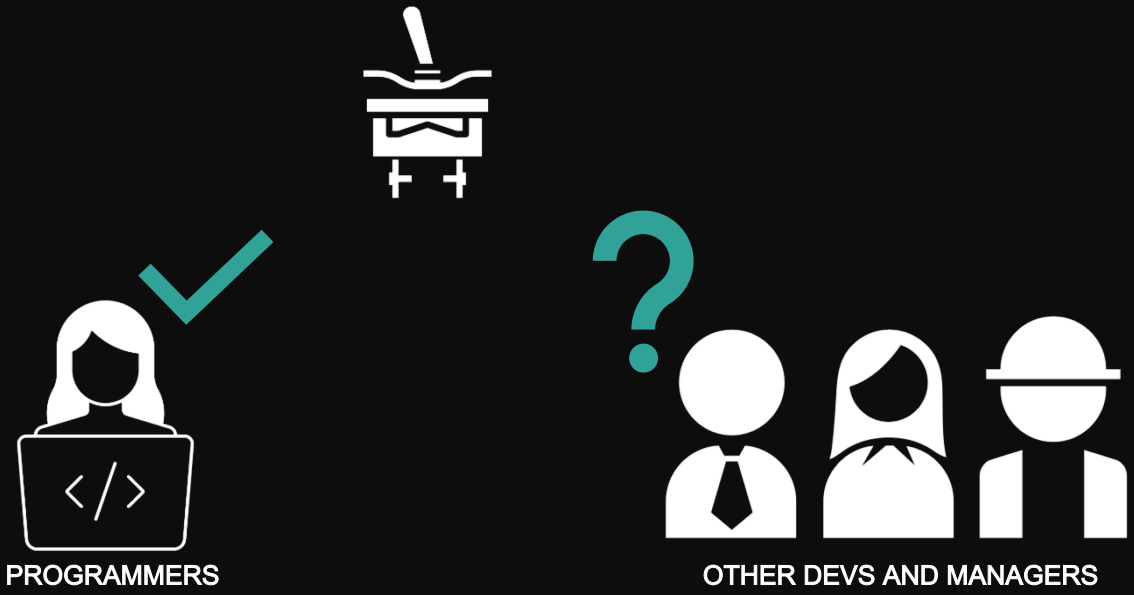
Balancing switch

Testing Grounds 2

Rework switch

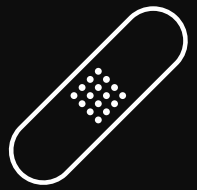
BONUS

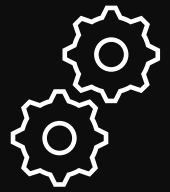
/ BROKE THE BRANCHING HABIT



FEAR OF PLAYER PERCEPTION

“Unfinished content in a AAA game?!”

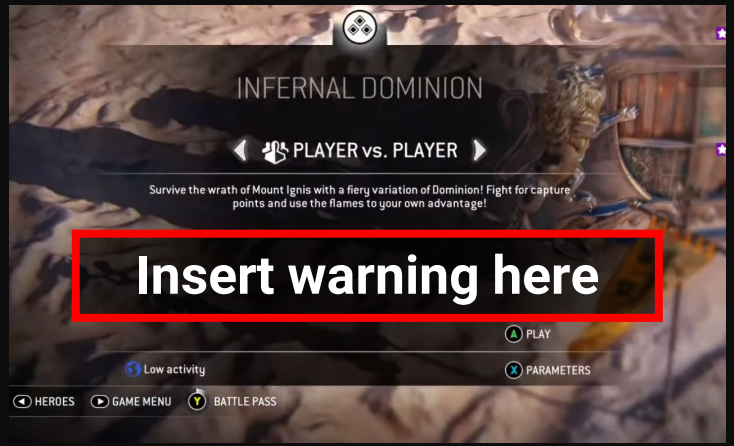




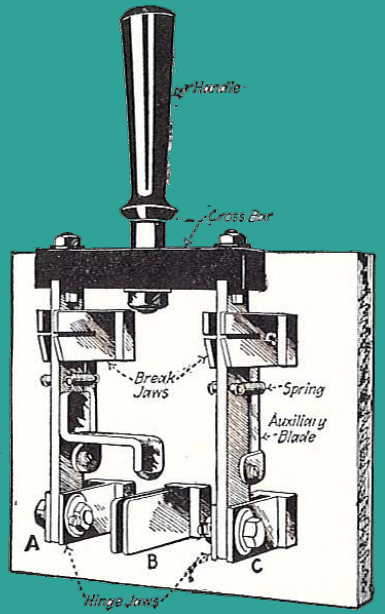
/ ADDRESSING THE FEAR: PLAYER PERCEPTION

CLEAR COMMUNICATION TO PLAYERS

Before you play

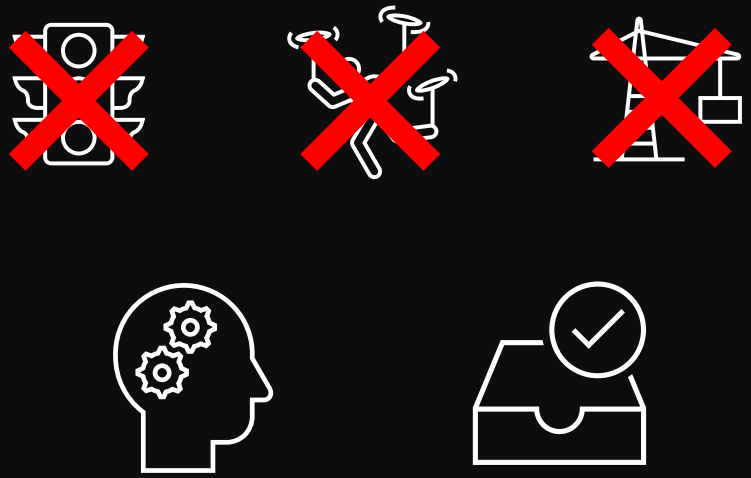


While you play



Ceci n'est pas une switch

WE CHANGED BECAUSE WE WERE CORNERED.



Photos from Pexels
Mati Mango
Skylar Kang
Johannes Plenio
cottonbro

Icons from The Noun Project
guarantee by Chattapat
Toggle switch by Template
Scientist by Start Up Graphic Design
Supply Chain by Jim Slatton
Stability Control by LAFS
Branch by Noël Rasendrason
game console by Eucalyp
test by DinosoftLab
Exclude by Chanut is Industries
programmer by Phạm Thanh Lộc
people by Reza Mostmand