Maximize game operations with least cost: Online operation experience of "Meteor Butterfly Sword"
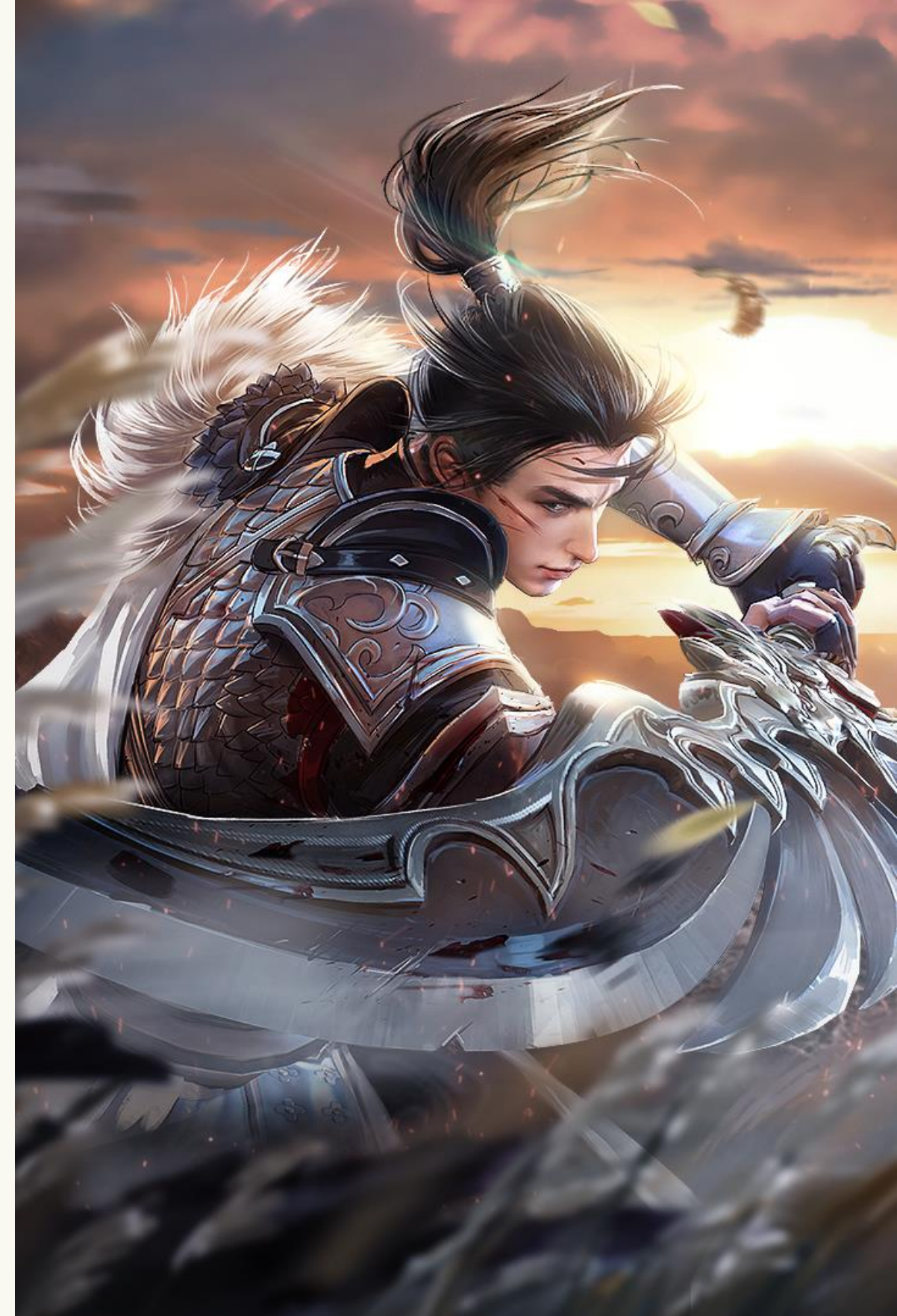
Shuhan Luo, UI/UX Designer, NetEase

Shuhan LUO

UI/UX Designer

Thunder Fire UX Team

NetEase

Outline

Game development process and studio workflow

User persona + Requirement deconstruction

Bimonthly version + Weekly unlock

Copy, Combine and Match

Result and takeaway

Meteor Butterfly Sword

A Chinese Wuxia game adapted from the novel of the same name.

100% made in China

Real Fight, real Kungfu

A life of righteous itinerant persons

The novel's spirits

GDC

Meteor Butterfly Sword

Release on August 16, 2018
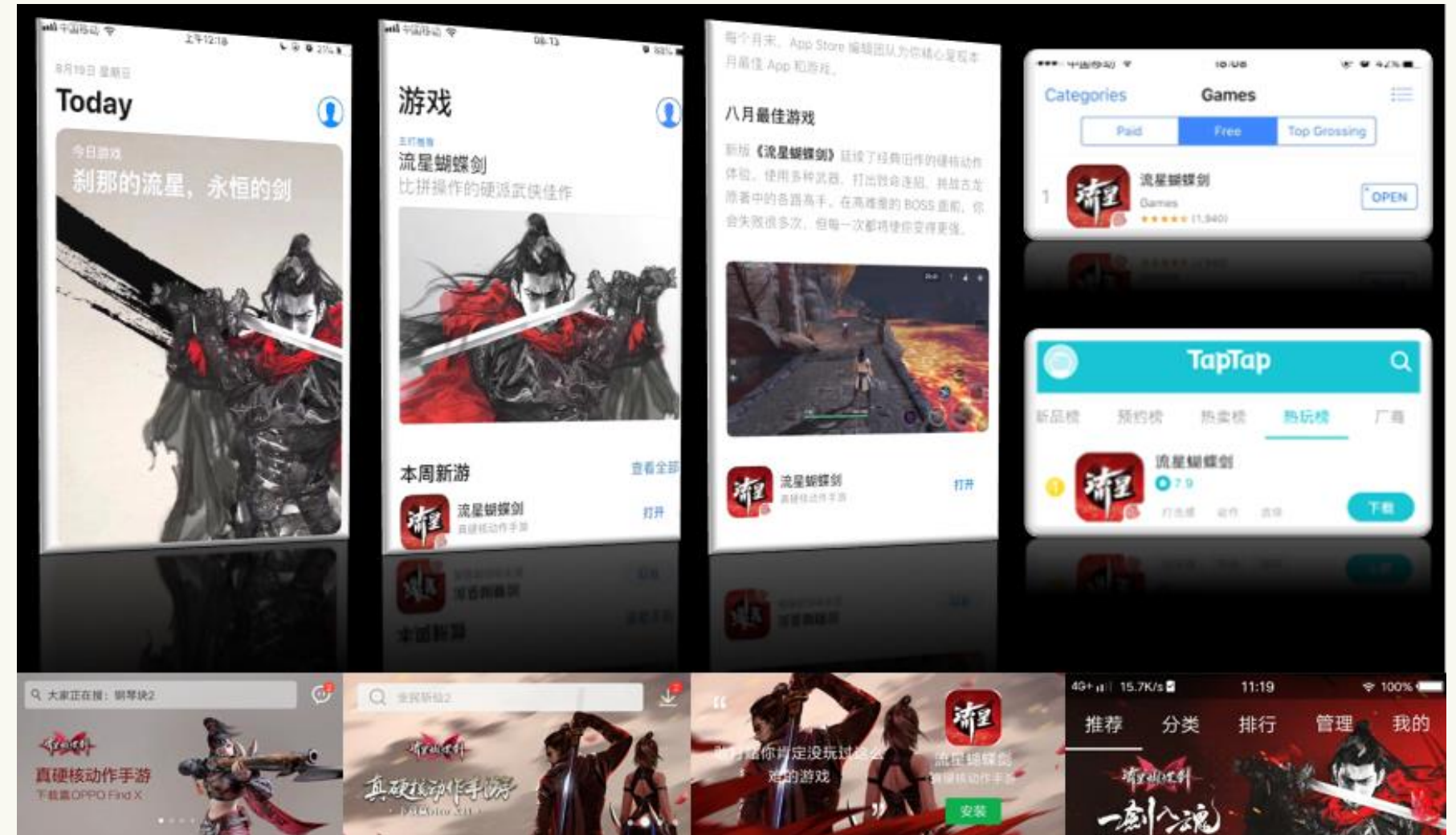
Topped on the download charts

Multiple recommendations

App Store "Today" recommend

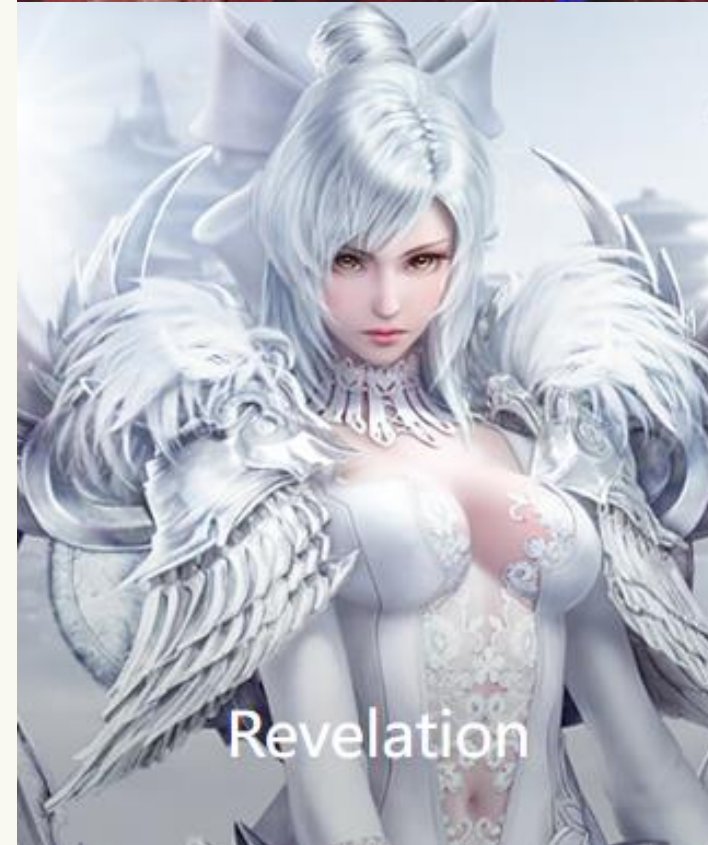The best game in August, 2018
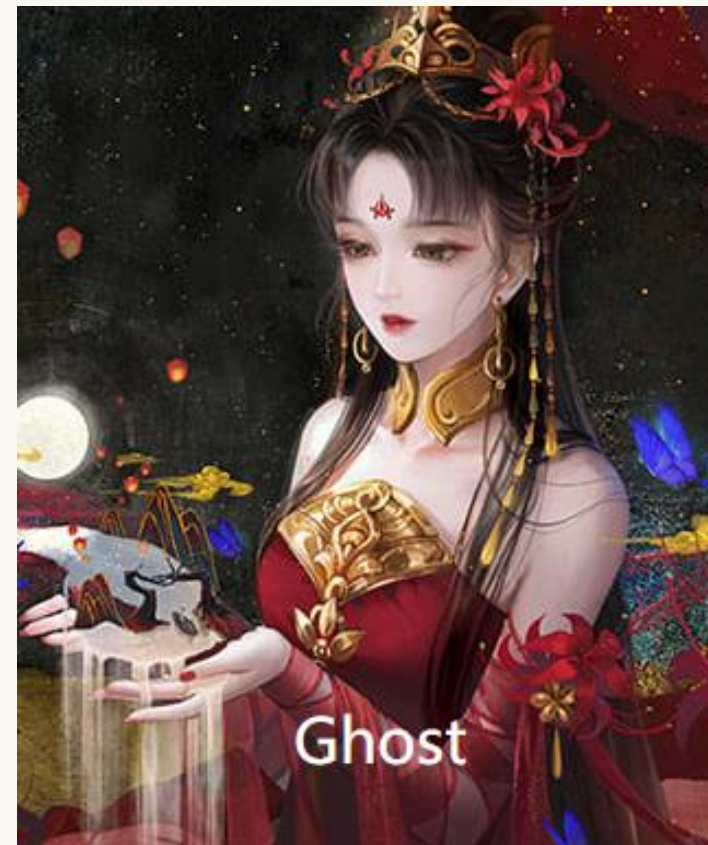
1st of free download list

…

Thunder Fire

Founded in 2007

Flagship games series:

Ghost, Justice, Revelation, and Naraka…

Thunder Fire

Game Studios：

Ghost

Justice

Revelation

Naraka

…

THUNDER FIRE
S T U D I O

Middle Platform

Support Teams：

UX team

Art team

Quality Assurance team

Marketing team

AI support team

…

Our studio

Producer

Project Manager

Game designers (System, Battle, Operation, Copywriter, Numerical…)

UX designers

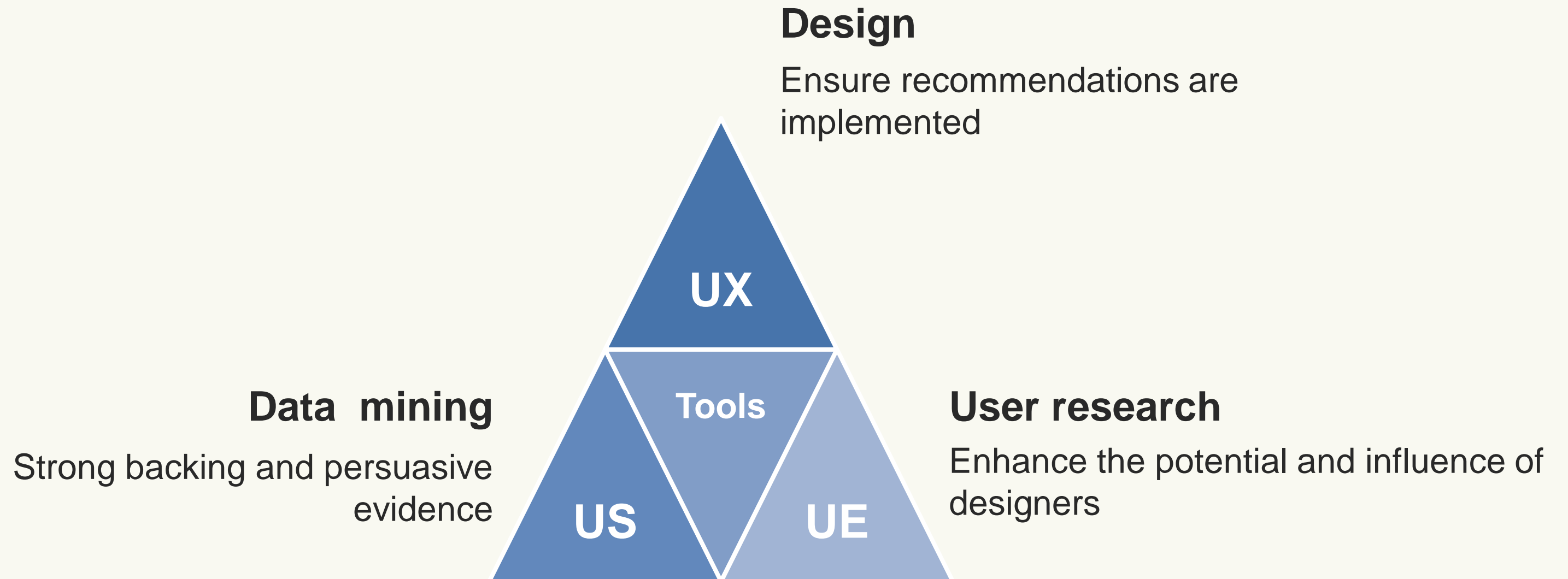Artists (UI designers, Concept designers, Modeling artists, Effect artist…)

Engineers (Client engineers, Server engineers)

QA

…

Thunder Fire UX Team

Design

Ensure recommendations are implemented

Data mining

Strong backing and persuasive evidence

UX

Tools

US

UE

User research

Enhance the potential and influence of designers

Product Development Process

Product Development Process

| Demo | Early stage | Studio Test | In-company Test | Free Test | Pay Test | Release |
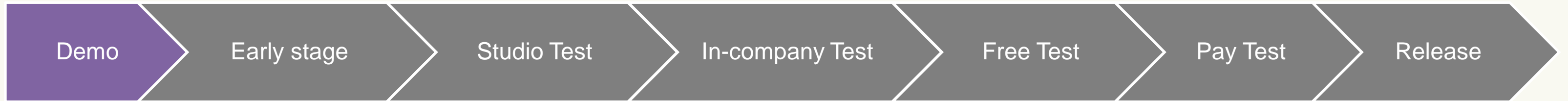
Phase-Demo

Make a playable demo

Art style, Technology choice, Investment value, Target players

3 months

Project Confirmed

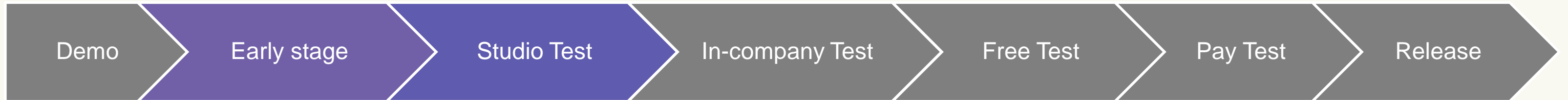# Chinese studio and working patterns

| Demo | Early stage | Studio Test | In-company Test | Free Test | Pay Test | Release |

Phase-Alpha

Make a game

System and Gameplay

Chinese studio and working patterns

Demo	Early stage	Studio Test	In-company Test	Free Test	Pay Test	Release

Online game
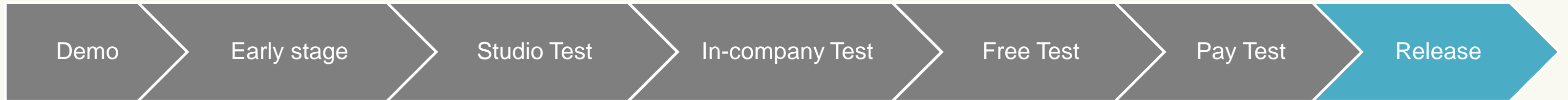publication number

Phase-Beta

Polish the game

Various tests

Gameplay, Peripheral system

Marketing Team (Commercial system, Operation mode)

UX Team (Data Analysis, User Experience Design, User Research…)

Chinese studio and working patterns

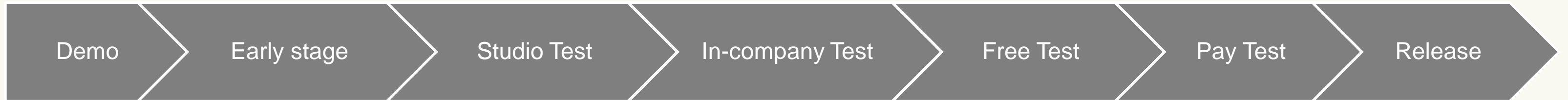| Demo	Early stage	Studio Test	In-company Test	Free Test	Pay Test	Release

Phase-Release & Operation

Ensure product quality

Life cycle extension

Improve user viscosity

Improve influence and public praise

Chinese studio and working patterns

Demo > Early stage > Studio Test > In-company Test > Free Test > Pay Test > Release
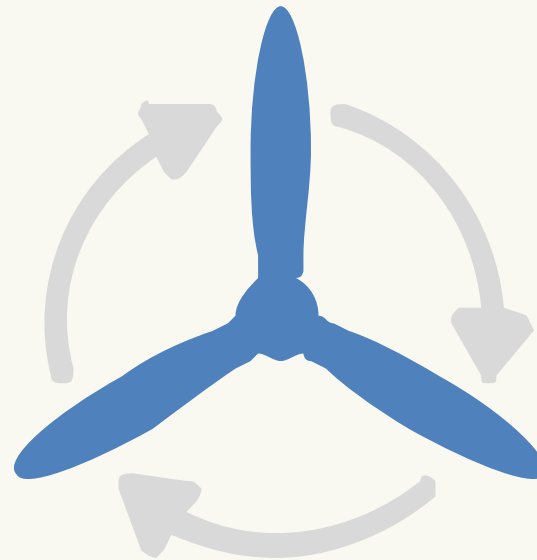
Phase-Shutdown

A new beginning

Project Workflow

Requirement Making Process

Project Planning

According to the summary from all parties,

establish key milestones and break down execution plan.

Project Implementation And Monitoring

Implement project plan,

monitor and adjust according to actual situation.

Project Closure And Follow-up

Project acceptance and release,

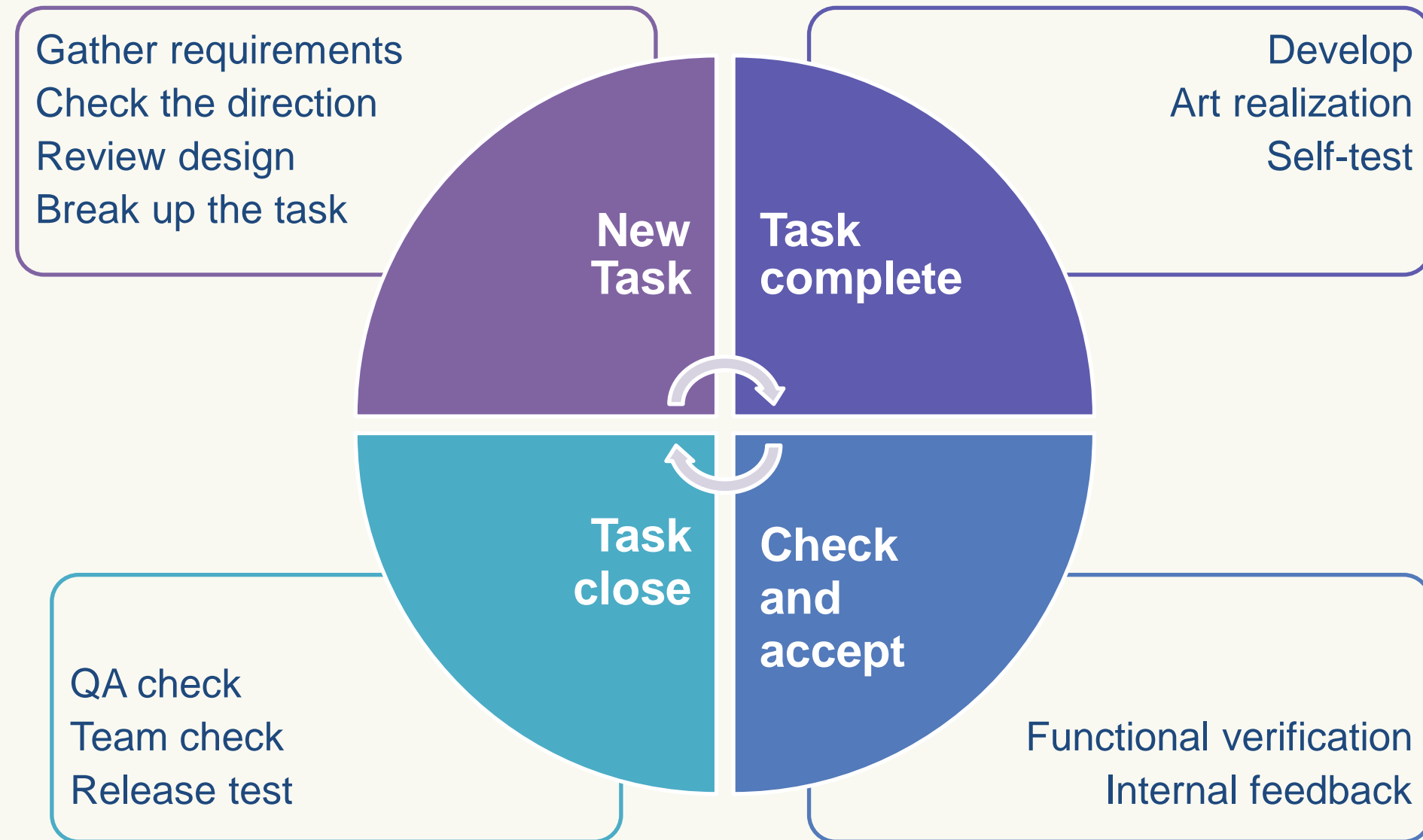regularly summarize the lessons learned during the project process.

Closed Loop in development

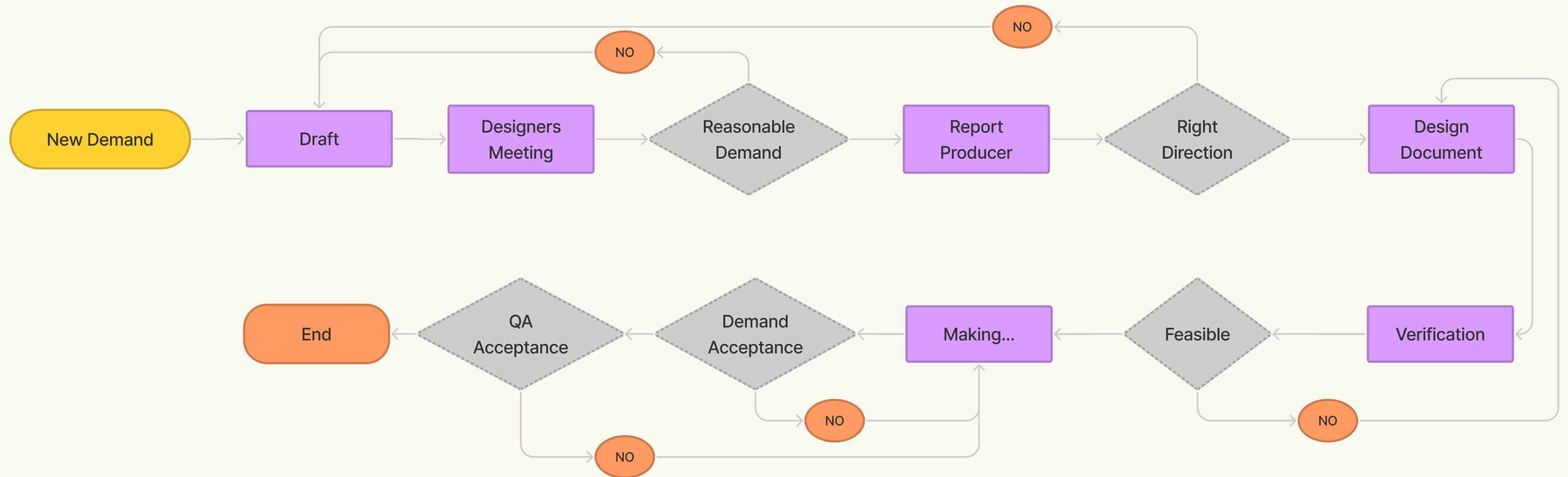**Designers:** Demand initiators. Follow the whole process.

Artists: Demand producer. Finish the design loop.

Engineers: Demand producer. Finish the program loop.

QA: Demand testers. Finish the testing loop.

Gather requirements
Check the direction
Review design
Break up the task

Develop
Art realization
Self-test

New Task

Task complete

Task close

Check and accept

QA check
Team check
Release test

Functional verification
Internal feedback

Requirement Making Process

Task in parallel, Efficiency improve

| Designers | | Design | UX design | Test data | | | Check | Release |

Designers → Design → UX design → Test data → Check → Release

Engineers → Server-side → Client-side → Self test → Access UI

Artists → Concept → Models → Binding

UI → Prefab → Effect

Movement → Effect → Sound

QA → Initial use case → Detailed use case → Test → Regression
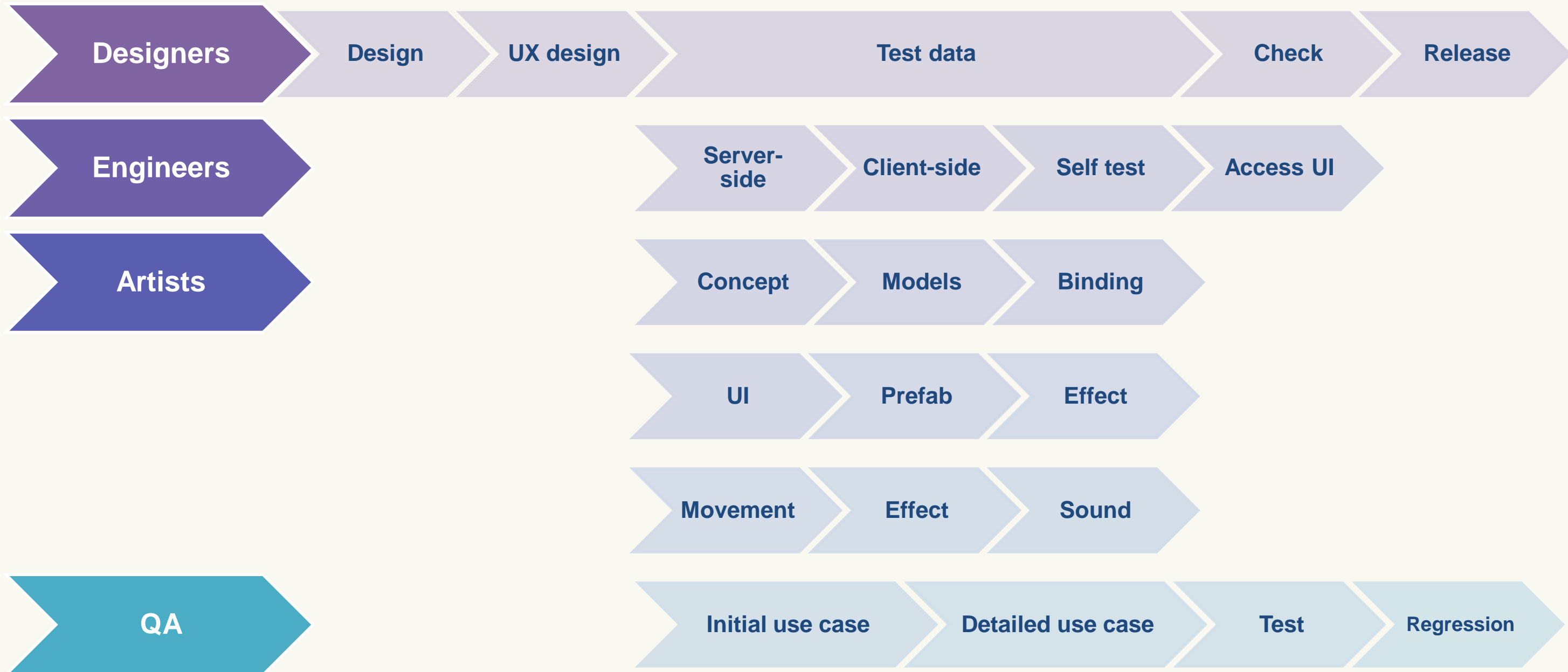
Versions in 3 Years

User persona & Requirement deconstruction

Player Insight

Core players

Good skill

Need new friends

Need stimulation

More …

New players

Learn fast

Keep up with the core players

Love the game

GDC

Targeted version content

For core players

New gameplay, new boss,

new weapons, new plot…

New servers

For new players

Smoother guide

Welfare for new players

New servers

Bimonthly version & Weekly unlock

Bimonthly version

Large updates

Create a climax

Pre-version test

Guarantee the effect

Multi-versions simultaneous development

Multiple branch version management

Design ahead of version

Accurate time estimation and scheduling

List of art production time estimates

Step	Type	Time
Character	Main Character	7-8 Weeks
	Weapon	2.5 Weeks
	Weapon Decoration	1.5 Weeks
	Boss	6 Weeks
	Little Boss	3-5 Weeks
	Qi	2.5-4 Weeks
Scene	Battle	5-7 Weeks
	Functional	3 Weeks
Interface	Icon	0.5 Day
	System	1-3 Days
	Activity	3-8 Days
	Main	10-13 Days

Weekly unlock

New things every week

Keep bringing players online

Iterate quickly according to public opinion

Experience and deficiency

Stable output

Low risk

Smooth experience

Low design agility

Long development cycle

Copy, Combine and Match

Changing and unchanging

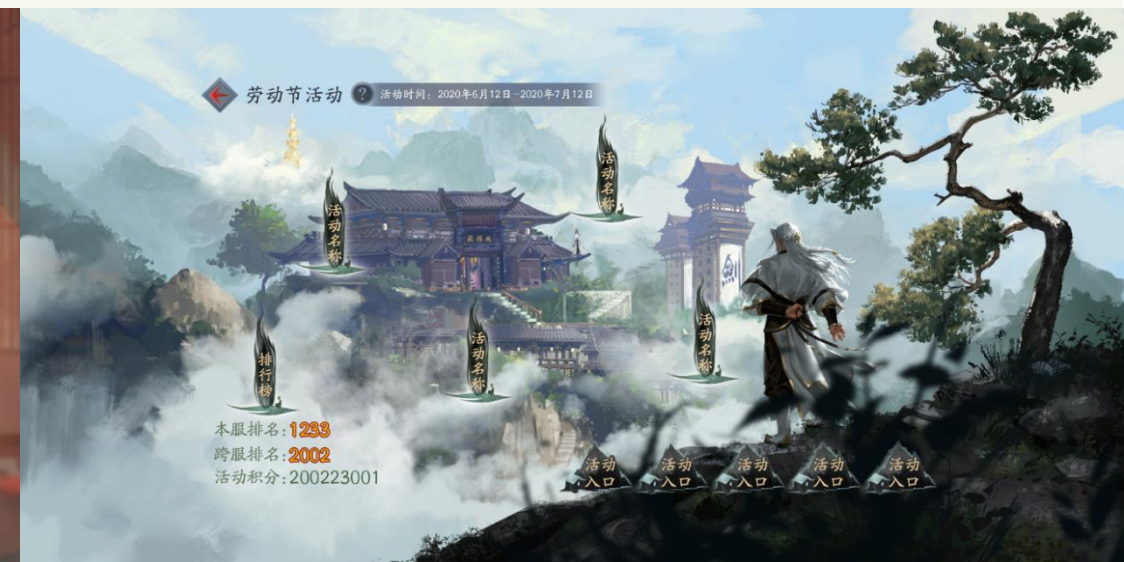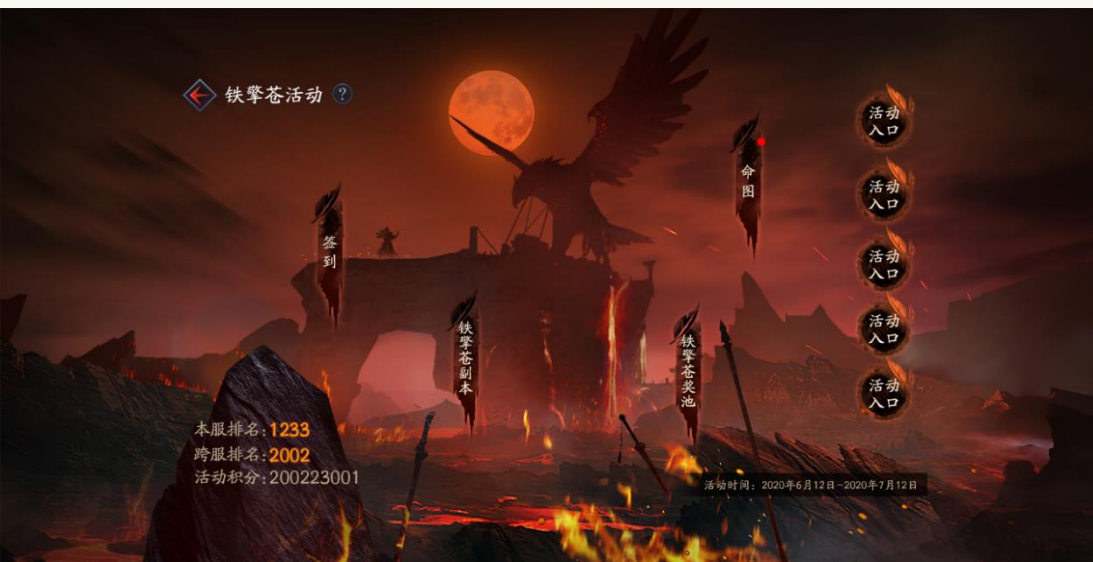System unchanged

Changing and unchanging

Main screen update every season

Changing and unchanging

Main screen update every season

Activities independently design

Recycle of activities

Periodical release

Cooling down to avoid feeling repetitive

Better every version

Brand-new packaging with theme of the season
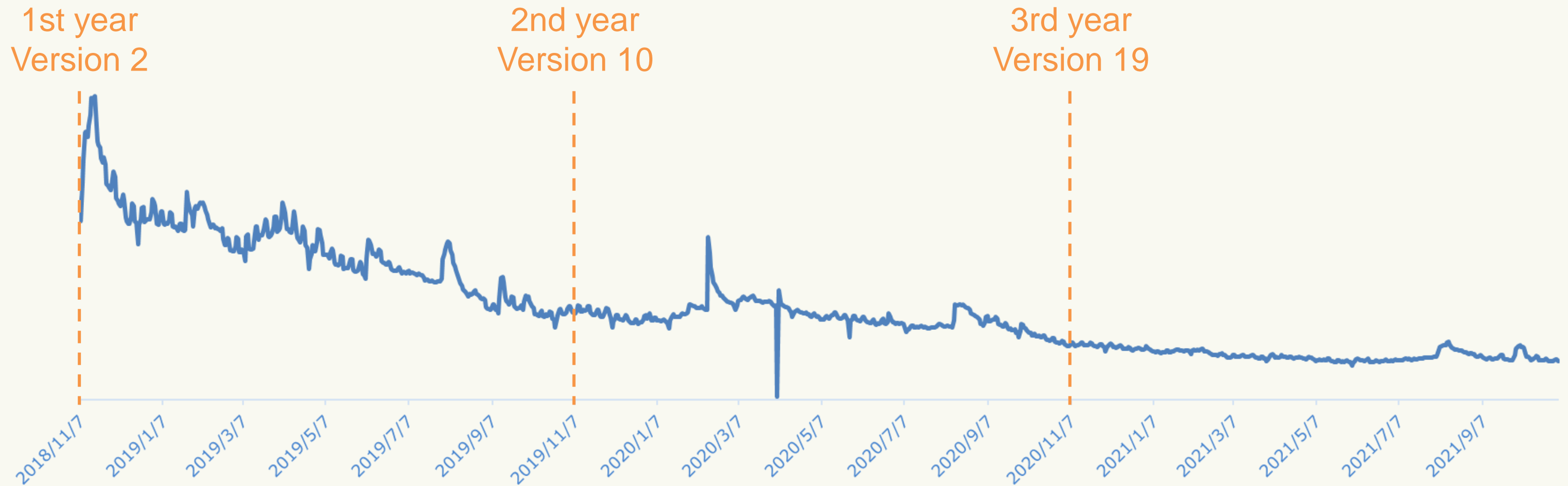
Mix with small activities

Activity EXT21

Activity EXT24

The results (Game Data)

26 versions in 3 years

Staff Arrangement

Flexible staff adjustment

A big team

High labor cost

Not always busy

Core members

The cornerstone

Overall planning

Middle platform

Guaranteed output

Flexible adjustment

Optimize labor cost

Max around game release: **100+ employees**

Now: **40+ (Some are part-time)**

- Designers: 4(full-time) + 5(part-time)
- UX Designers: 2(part-time)
- Engineers: 2 (full-time)
- Artists: 20(part-time)
- QA: 4(part-time)
- Other:5

Multiple incentives

Emotional motivation

Goal motivation

Physical motivation

Team motivation

Takeaway

Takeaway

Our game development pattern

Standardized development process

Staying together with the players

Maximize the use of material

Thank you!

LUO Shuhan

UI/UX Designer, NetEase