

NOT-SO-SOCIAL GAMES

WHY THEY'RE ACTUALLY OK IN THE LONG TERM

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INTRODUCTION

- SO, ONE OF THE **CONDITIONS** I WAS GIVEN FOR SPEAKING TODAY WAS THAT I HAD TO SAY SOMETHING **CONTROVERSIAL**
- EASY! SOCIAL GAMES ARE **NOT IN FACT SOCIAL**
- WELL, THEY **ARE** IF YOU MEAN "GAMES PLAYED ON **SOCIAL NETWORK SITES**"
- THEY'RE **NOT** IF YOU MEAN "GAMES THAT RELY ON A SOCIAL **COMPONENT** FOR THEIR GAMEPLAY"

THE GENRE

- SOCIAL GAMES **DIFFER** FROM CASUAL GAMES
- SOCIAL GAMES ARE BASICALLY **SOLO** GAMES WITH A **VENEER** OF INTERPERSONAL CONTACT
 - CASUAL GAMES DON'T HAVE THAT VENEER
- THE SOCIAL ASPECT ADDS **VALIDITY**
 - YOU CAN'T ACTUALLY **SOCIALISE** THROUGH THEM
- IT **USED** TO ADD **VIRALITY**, BUT THAT'S NOT AS **EFFECTIVE** THESE DAYS
 - IT'S ALMOST AS IF PLAYERS HAVE BECOME **INURED** TO BEGGING MESSAGES...

IN/EXTRINSIC

- HERE'S A PICTURE OF SOME **different** PEOPLE



- DIFFERENT EXCEPT THEY WON OLYMPIC **MEDALS**

IN/EXTRINSIC

- **INTRINSIC** REWARDS ARE **INHERENT** TO AN ACTIVITY ITSELF
 - EG. FORMULATING A **CUNNING PLAN** IN CHESS
- **EXTRINSIC** REWARDS ARE **ACQUIRED** FOR DOING AN ACTIVITY
 - EG. PHAT LEWT
- UNLIKE GAMES IN **GENERAL**, SOCIAL GAMES ENGAGE THEIR PLAYERS **MAINLY** THROUGH **EXTRINSIC** REWARDS
 - BADGES, ACHIEVEMENTS, RANKINGS, **MEDALS...**

ASIDE

- THE **SUCCESS** OF THIS APPROACH HAS SPUN OFF THE ENTIRE **GAMIFICATION** INDUSTRY
- GAMES ARE **PLAY** YOU CAN **LOSE** AT
- GAMIFIED ACTIVITIES ARE **NOT** PLAY AND YOU **CAN'T** LOSE AT THEM
- GAMES TEND TO OFFER EXTRINSIC REWARDS FOR ACTIVITIES THE PLAYER **ALREADY** FINDS FUN
- IN GAMIFICATION, **RECEIPT** OF THE REWARD IS **ITSELF** THE SOURCE OF THE FUN
 - WHILE THE REWARD IS **TREATED** AS A REWARD...

GOLDFINGER



- HERE, HAVE A **GOLD STAR!**

ADDITIONALLY

- NOT ONLY ARE SOCIAL GAMES NOT **SOCIAL**, MANY DESIGNERS BELIEVE THEY'RE NOT **GAMES**, EITHER
- THEY HAVE A **POINT** TOO
 - CAN YOU **WIN** A SOCIAL GAME? CAN YOU **LOSE** ONE? SO HOW CAN THEY COUNT AS **GAMES**?
- CRUCIALLY, SOCIAL GAMES LACK **GAMEPLAY**
 - GAMEPLAY IS AN **INTRINSIC** REWARD THING
- SO **WHY** DO PEOPLE **PLAY** SOCIAL GAMES?
- WELL, THEY VALUE THE **EXTRINSIC** REWARDS

LEARNING

- THIS ISN'T GOING TO **LAST**, THOUGH
- SEE, PEOPLE ARE ACTUALLY PRETTY **SMART**
- THEY'RE EXCELLENT **PATTERN-MATCHERS** AND **DATA-PROCESSORS**
- IF THEY **REPEAT** SOMETHING – ANYTHING – OVER AND OVER, THEY EVENTUALLY **NOTICE**
- THEN, THEY BECOME **BORED** AND **LISTLESS**
- THIS APPLIES TO **GAMES** JUST LIKE IT DOES EVERYTHING **ELSE**

WORSE

- HOWEVER, IT APPLIES **MORE** TO **SOCIAL GAMES**
 - **EXTRINSIC** REWARDS ONLY HAVE **VALUE** FOR AS LONG AS PLAYERS **AGREE** THAT THEY HAVE
 - WHEN THEY REALISE THAT THEY **DON'T**, OH DEAR...
- **BAD:** "THIS GAME IS BORING; I KEEP DOING THE SAME OLD THINGS AND ANY PROGRESS I MAKE JUST LEADS TO YET MORE WORK"
- **WORSE:** "THIS NEW GAME IS JUST LIKE THAT OLD GAME WHICH QUICKLY BECAME BORING"

CROSS-LEVEL

- THIS PATTERN-MATCHING CAN HAPPEN AT **ANY** LEVEL
- **MECHANICS:** "THIS MATCH-3 CANDY CRUSH SAGA MECHANIC IS JUST LIKE IN BEJEWELLED"
- **GAMEPLAY:** "HEY, THIS MMO CRAFTING WINDOW IS BASICALLY JUST MATCH-3"
- **SYSTEM:** "OH, THIS NEW GENRE-BASED MOBILE PHONE BATTLE SYSTEM IS JUST LIKE WITH THE MATCH-3 RUSH ALL OVER AGAIN"

ULTIMATELY

- IF PEOPLE PLAY A GAME **ENOUGH** THEN A **NEW** GAME WITH THE SAME **MECHANICS** OR **GAMEPLAY** OR **SYSTEM** WILL ELICIT ONE OF **TWO** RESPONSES:
 - “I CAN SEE WHERE THIS IS HEADING AND I **DON'T WANT** TO GO THERE”
 - “I CAN SEE WHERE THIS IS HEADING AND I **WANT** TO GO THERE”
- FOR TODAY'S **SOCIAL GAMES**, IT WILL BE THE **FORMER** RATHER THAN THE **LATTER**

NEXT STEPS

- THERE WILL **INEVITABLY** BE A MOVE FROM EXTRINSIC REWARDS TO INTRINSIC REWARDS
 - INTRINSIC IS WHERE ALL THE **FUN** IS
- **BUT** **different** PEOPLE FIND **different** THINGS FUN
- THEY'LL **EXPLORE** THE GAMES THAT OFFER GAMEPLAY THEY **PERSONALLY** FIND FUN
- AS A RESULT, SOCIAL GAMES ARE BEGINNING THE **EDUCATION** OF NON-GAMERS, WHO WILL THUS COME TO WANT **ACTUAL GAMES**

EXAMPLE 1

- EXAMPLE: SOME PEOPLE FIND **INTERACTION** WITH OTHER PLAYERS FUN
 - THEY'RE ILL-SERVED BY "SOCIAL" GAMES THAT TREAT OTHER PEOPLE AS **RESOURCES** TO BE **MINED**
 - **ESPECIALLY** ONCE THEY NOTICE THAT THE MOMENT THEY **PAY** FOR SOMETHING IN-GAME, THE GAME GETS **HARDER...**
- THESE PEOPLE WANT **MULTI-PLAYER** GAMES

EXAMPLE 2

- EXAMPLE: SOME PEOPLE FIND THE **PROBLEM-SOLVING** ASPECT OF GAMES FUN
 - THEY WOULD HAPPILY **DOWNLOAD** A GAME AND PLAY IT ALONE **OFFLINE**
 - THEY ONLY NEED THE CHECK-IN **VALIDATION** THAT A SOCIAL ASPECT OFFERS
- THESE PEOPLE WANT MULTI-PLAYER **GAMES**

PREDICTIONS

- SOCIAL GAMES WILL **F R A G M E N T** AS PLAYERS PURSUE THEIR PARTICULAR **TASTES**
- WE'RE ALREADY SEEING SOME **EFFECTS** OF THIS
 - CASUAL GAMES ON SOCIAL NETWORKS GARNERING **MORE** PLAYERS THAN SOCIAL GAMES
- DEVELOPERS WHO ARE READY TO **RECEIVE** THE NEWCOMERS SHOULD DO **WELL**
 - OR AT LEAST BETTER THAN IF THEY **WEREN'T** READY
 - IT NOW COSTS MORE TO **ACQUIRE** A NEW PLAYER THAN YOU CAN EXPECT TO **EARN** FROM THEM

CONCLUSION

- SOCIAL GAMES **AREN'T** SOCIAL AND THEY **AREN'T** GAMES, BUT THEY **ARE** THE **GATEWAY** TO **ACTUAL** SOCIAL GAMES
- IN THE COMING FEW YEARS, WE CAN EXPECT **HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS** OF NEWLY-MINTED GAMERS TO APPEAR
- HOWEVER, THEY **WON'T** ALL WANT TO PLAY THE **SAME** GAMES
- SO CHOOSE A **NICHE** AND GET THERE **FIRST**
– THEN WAIT FOR MONEY TO **RAIN** FROM THE **SKY**