

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

LESSONS FOR CASUAL GAMES FROM MMOS

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CASUAL CONNECT, AMSTERDAM

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INTRODUCTION

- IN THIS TALK, I'M GOING TO DISCUSS **SOME** OF THE PROBLEMS **YET TO COME** FOR CASUAL GAMES
 - ALTHOUGH THEY'RE ONLY **PROBLEMS** IF YOU DON'T SEE THEM AS **OPPORTUNITIES**
- SO, MY **BACKGROUND** IS IN **MMOS**
- SOME OF THE THINGS WE'RE NOW SEEING IN **CASUAL GAMES**, WE'VE SEEN **BEFORE** IN MMOS
- WE THEREFORE KNOW WHAT TO **EXPECT**
 - AND WHAT TO **DO** ABOUT IT

EXPANSION

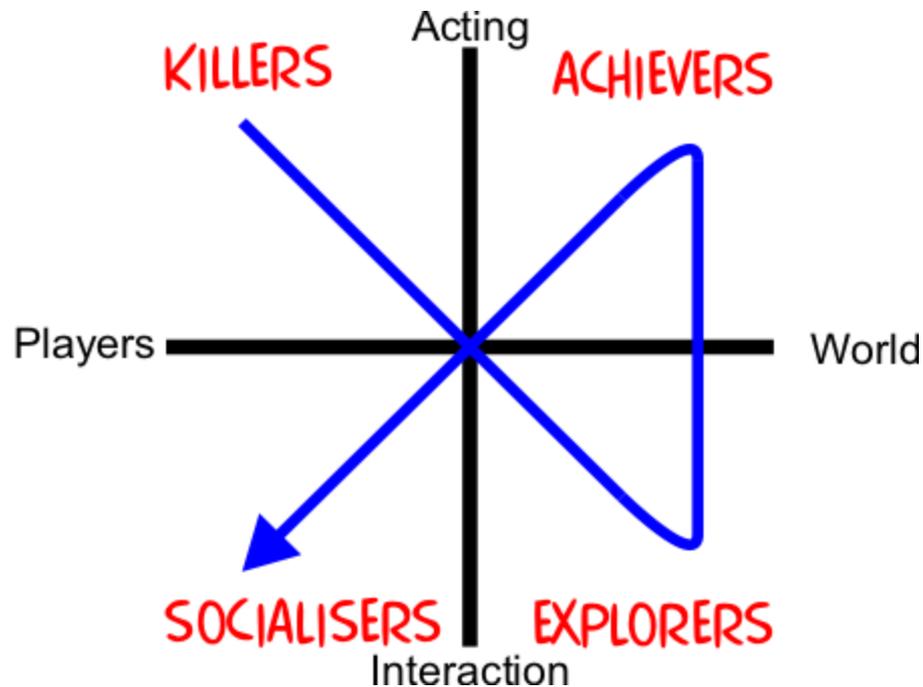
- SOCIAL, CASUAL AND MOBILE GAMES ARE **GREAT** AT ENGAGING BRAND NEW PLAYERS
 - PEOPLE WHO PREVIOUSLY **WEREN'T** PLAYING GAMES
- THERE'S LOTS OF MONEY TO BE MADE HERE!
- **HOWEVER**, PEOPLE WHO **PLAY** GAMES DON'T **JUST** PLAY THEM
- THEY **ABSORB** THEM
 - COMING TO **UNDERSTAND** WHAT THEY'RE PLAYING
- INEVITABLY, THEY'LL WANT TO **PROGRESS** TO MORE **CHALLENGING** CONTENT

TRAINING

- THE GAMES NEW PLAYERS PLAY TODAY ARE **TRAINING** THEM IN THE WAYS OF GAMES
- THE GAMES THEY PLAY TOMORROW **WILL** BE MORE ADVANCED THAN THE ONES THEY PLAY **NOW**
 - AS WITH THEIR TASTES IN MUSIC, MOVIES AND BOOKS
- THIS HAS BEEN KNOWN ABOUT IN MMOS FOR **DECADES**
 - PLAYERS' TASTES CHANGE IN **PREDICTABLE** WAYS
- THERE ARE ACTUALLY **4** PATHS, BUT MOST MMO PLAYERS FOLLOW THE **MAIN SEQUENCE**

MAIN SEQUENCE

- KILLER → EXPLORER → ACHIEVER → SOCIALISER



- FIND **BOUNDARIES**, EXPLORE **INSIDE**, TRY TO **BEAT** IT, HANG OUT WITH **FRIENDS**

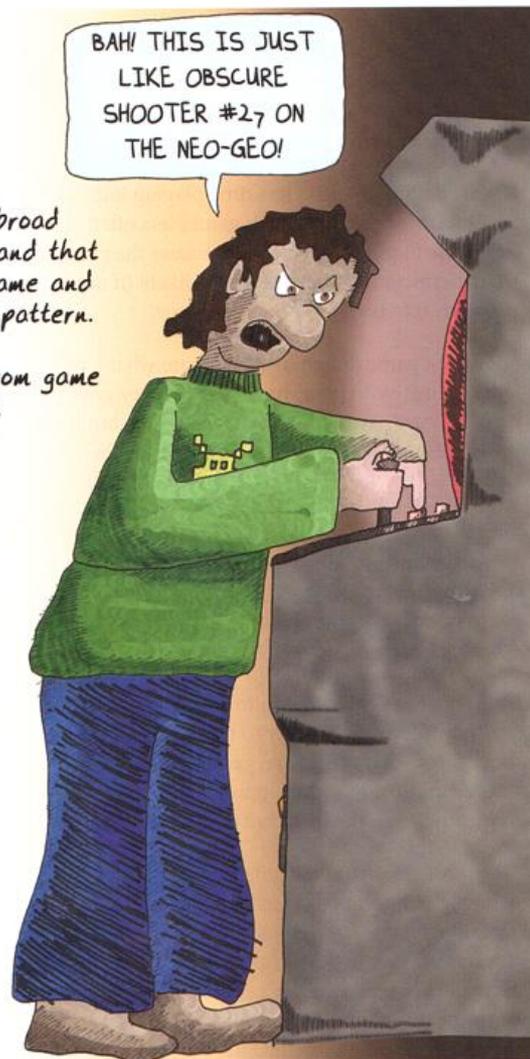
DIFFERENCE

- THIS HAPPENS TO **ALL** MMO PLAYERS WHO PLAY FOR **FUN** FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME
- CASUAL GAMES **AREN'T** MMOS, BUT A **SIMILAR** THING HAPPENS
- PLAYERS FIND WHAT GAMES ARE ON **OFFER**, EXPLORE WHICH OF THESE THEY **LIKE**, GET **GOOD** AT THEM, THEN **MOVE ON**
- IMPORTANT: THIS AFFECTS THEIR RELATIONSHIP NOT ONLY TO **INDIVIDUAL** GAMES, BUT TO **ALL** GAMES OF THE SAME GENRE

A THEORY OF FUN

Some gamers will have broad experience with games, and that lets them see a given game and quickly grok the entire pattern.

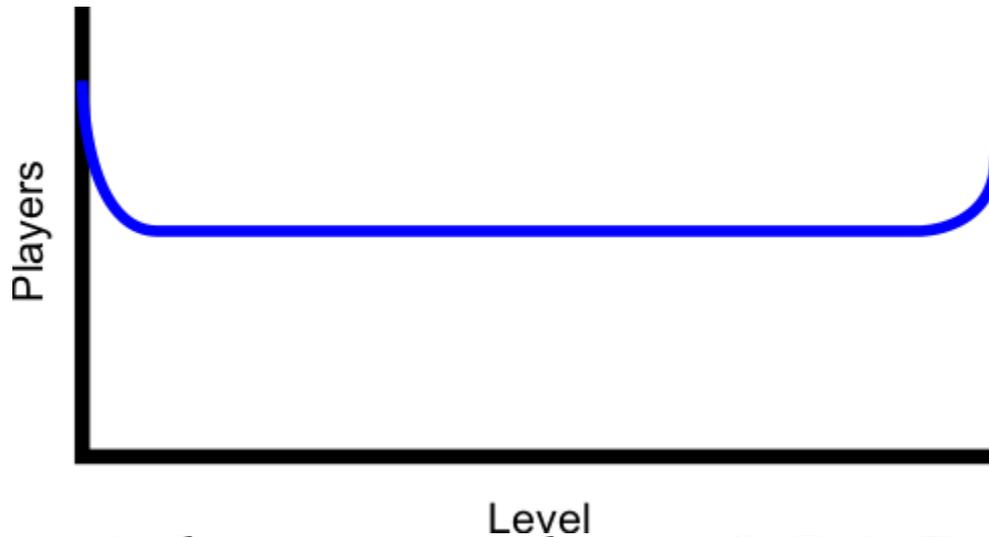
They end up flitting from game to game like butterflies.



- (ALL GOOD GAME DESIGNERS HAVE THIS BOOK)

DISTRIBUTION

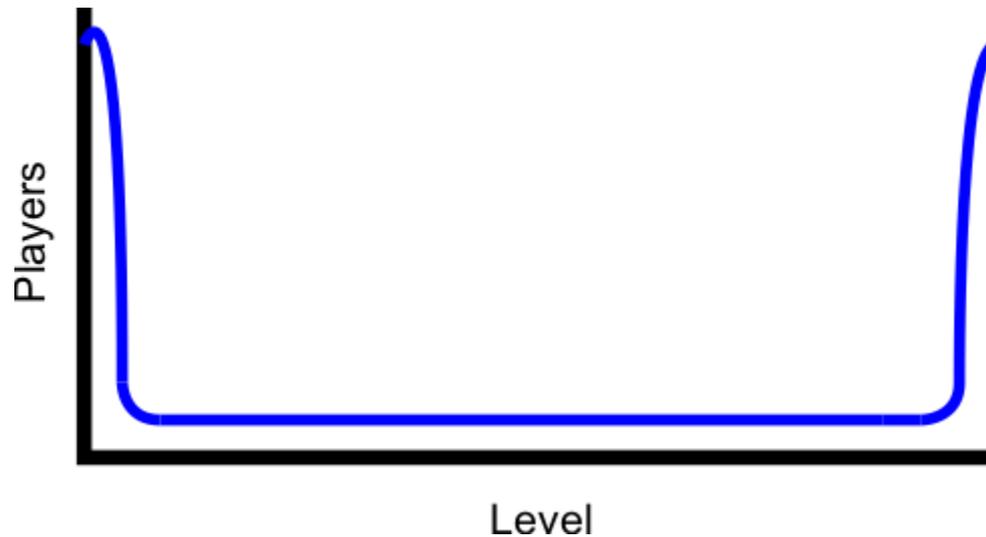
- HERE'S WHAT A TYPICAL MMO **EXPERIENCE** LEVEL DISTRIBUTION LOOKS LIKE AFTER A FEW **WEEKS**



- PLAYERS PROGRESS AT **DIFFERENT** RATES

HOWEVER

- HERE'S WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE AFTER A FEW **MONTHS**



- PLAYERS **PROGRESS** AT DIFFERENT RATES, BUT THEY **DO** REACH THE END

"THE END"

- WHEN PLAYERS REACH "THE END", THEY EXPECT END-GAME **CONTENT**
- IT'S THE **SAME** WITH CASUAL GAMES
- AT THE MOMENT, YOU HAVE **MILLIONS** OF PEOPLE PLAYING **CASUAL** GAMES
- THEY'RE **LEARNING TO PLAY GAMES**
- OVER TIME, YOU'LL SEE THE **SAME** CURVE
 - A **SPIKE** FOR PEOPLE WHO **DIDN'T** PLAY GAMES AS CHILDREN, THEN A **SPIKE** FOR PEOPLE WHO WANT MORE SOPHISTICATED GAMES

MOVING ON

- ALTHOUGH YOU **WILL** HAVE PEOPLE PLAYING YOUR GAMES IN FUTURE, THEY **WON'T** BE THE **SAME** PEOPLE
- THOSE PEOPLE WILL HAVE **MOVED ON**
- SO WHERE WILL THEY **MOVE?**
- WELL, THEY'LL MOVE WHEREVER YOU **POINT** THEM!
 - SO LONG AS IT **IS** ACTUAL PROGRESS IN TERMS OF SOPHISTICATION
- **KNOWING** THIS, WHAT CAN YOU **DO?**

WRONG WAY

- AN OBVIOUS (BUT COMMON) **WRONG** RESPONSE IS TO GRAFT **CASUAL** FEATURES ONTO A MORE **SOPHISTICATED** GAME
- WHAT YOU **SHOULD** DO IS GRAFT MORE SOPHISTICATED FEATURES ONTO CASUAL GAMES
 - **THIS** WAY, YOU TAKE THE PLAYERS **WITH** YOU
- ANALOGY: IF PEOPLE LEARNING TO READ WANT MORE **CHALLENGING** BOOKS, YOU PUT MORE **TEXT** BETWEEN THE **ILLUSTRATIONS**
- YOU **DON'T** ILLUSTRATE *WAR AND PEACE..!*

ALSO WRONG

- **ANOTHER** WRONG WAY IS TO MISTAKE **COMPLEXITY** FOR SOPHISTICATION
- OK, SOME PEOPLE **DO** DEMAND MORE DETAILED CONTENT
 - EG. EVER-HARDER FIND-THE-HIDDEN-OBJECT GAMES
- THEY EVENTUALLY **BURN OUT**, THOUGH
- THEN, THEY'LL LOOK FOR SOMETHING **ELSE** TO **DRILL** INTO – PERHAPS EVEN **NON-GAMES!**
 - SO ... TRY TO **LEAD** THEM TO **YOUR** OFFERINGS, RATHER THAN LET THEM FIND STUFF THEMSELVES?

ABSTRACT

- OTHER PEOPLE WILL WANT MORE **ABSTRACT** CONTENT
 - EG. EVER-HARDER STRATEGIC REASONING
- **FEW** PEOPLE “WANT MORE OF THE SAME”
 - THEY WANT “MORE OF THE SAME, BUT **BETTER**”
- IMPORTANT: YOU **STILL** NEED TO SELL YOUR **LESS** SOPHISTICATED CONTENT, EVEN IT'S JUST IN SMALL **VOLUMES**
- WITH NO **ENTRY-LEVEL** CONTENT, **NEW** PLAYERS CAN'T **REACH** THE ADVANCED CONTENT!

CAUTION

- MANY OF YOU **YOUNGSTERS** WILL HAVE **NO IDEA** WHAT AN **ADVENTURE** GAME IS
- THIS IS BECAUSE ADVENTURE GAMES GOT SO **ESOTERIC** THEY **LOST** THEIR **AUDIENCE**
- NO-ONE COULD FATHOM THE **PUZZLES**
 - *GABRIEL KNIGHT 3*: TO STEAL A MOPED, PICKPOCKET YOUR FRIEND'S PASSPORT, PLACE MASKING TAPE OVER A HOLE IN A SHED WALL, CHASE A BLACK CAT INTO THE HOLE, REMOVE CAT FUR FROM THE MASKING TAPE, FASHION A FALSE MOUSTACHE FROM IT USING SYRUP; THEN, TAKE A MARKER PEN AND DRAW A MOUSTACHE ON THE PASSPORT SO THAT IN YOUR FALSE MOUSTACHE YOU'LL LOOK LIKE THE PICTURE...

SUMMARY

- PLAYERS **REFINE** THEIR TASTES AS THEY PLAY
- ANALOGY: THE MUSIC YOU LISTEN TO **TODAY** IS **NOT** THE MUSIC OF YOUR YOUTH
 - HOWEVER, YOU **NEED TO HAVE LISTENED** TO THAT MUSIC IN ORDER TO **APPRECIATE** WHAT YOU LISTEN TO TODAY
- OFFERING SAME-BUT-**HARDER** IS PROFITABLE NOW BUT ULTIMATELY **SELF-DEFEATING**
- AIM TO PROVIDE A **GRADUATED** PLAYER EXPERIENCE TO GET THEM TO YOUR **END** GAMES