New strategies of game design: Using time as a direct factor.

Jing, Zhang
Department of Computer Science, Furman University, Greenville, SC

Introduction

Most strategies for contemporary game design encourage people to spend more time, effort and money. This dominate goal faces an inevitable dilemma: the more one be encouraged into the game, for example time, the less he/she will become interested. Such dilemma can be considered from three aspects:

- time: The more time one spend into the game, the more familiar with the game he/she becomes, resulting in increasingly feeling of bored.
- effort: the more effort one put, the more tired or bored one may feel. Once the pleasure one gains become less than the tired feeling one playing, he/she will stop playing the game.
- money: The more money one invest in the game, the more likely he/she becomes overpower in the game. Such power lets people lose their goal in game and also destroys the balance of the game. (Money is probably most direct factor to value a game. It results in many illusion for developers to make a relatively bad game in order to gain more profits.)

The new strategy I develop and concludes from popular games dealing with this dilemma. It is both cheap and effective: since there is no requirement for new technologies applied, only needs more subtle design for structure or arrangement of a game. It should make the game more sustainable.

The new strategy, Time strategy(TS), deals with using time as a direct factor to design the structure of one game.

characteristics of new strategy

TS means the design should assign time more direct value in order to make the game more sustainable. For common example, online games often give player bonus according to their long online time in the game. TS can be concluded into three aspects:

- transfer time into direct game currency: (exchange happens directly between online time and game currency, for example: 100 hours online time for one bonus, mission or equipment. Encourage people to stay loyalty by directly give value of time spending.
- making specific time more valuable than other time: To encourage people to stay online by specific time, it tries to cultivate people’s habit of login the game more frequently. For example, special simple mission may appears 12:00am everyday. Customers will gain bonus by almost no effort input.
- waiting time value: encourage people to merely log into the game after certain interval(for examples, every one hours players get a chance of lottery). This requires only a click time, thus let player also value their waiting time, making players log into the game more frequently.

overview of other game design strategies

It is hard to consider the game design strategies without considering the game type. When people talk about game type, it already includes certain strategies of design. For examples, RTS(real-time strategies, RPG(role-playing game), and FPS(first-person shoot) are already be understood as certain playing style when people seeing the name. Thus design strategy, design techniques, and design theory are overlap by common sense. Most game design books talk about how to design in different aspect rather than have some systematic theories of design. Most theories of design usually concluded strategies from psychology aspect. For example, the Figure is the most famous "flow channel theory". It suggests the best choice of design a game is letting people to stay in the flow channel. Otherwise, people will easily give up the game.

Why PC games are different from mobile phone games?

Distinctions of PC game and mobile phone game are due to the different technology level according to the history.

Games in computer have capacity of designing much complex than mobile phone games.

Make comparisons, before 2000, computer games can be designed more complex just like red alarm and starcraft. While Mobile phone games are all like gluttonous snake, which is simple, colorful, low memory and low cpu requirement.

After 2012, when smartphones emerge with 4G network are available, phone games start to have the capacity of more complex design.

Moreover, phone games should design less intense according to fractional time of users. Users are usually at their fractional time when playing the phone games. This requires a design of short, and less intense play format, while richness in long-term goals. Thus phone games tend to design small, short game with more collective pleasure. While PC games are designed to be more focused.

This is probably the reasons why time strategy origins from mobile phone games. Clash of clan is one of the typical and earliest example of such strategy.

advantages or goals of this strategies

Such technique of design strategy should have three objectives which especially benefit to maintain the sustainability of games.

First, To restrict people from long time and intense effort playing, instead encouraging people with short time playing and more frequently login in long period. For example, not encouraging playing 10 hours a day, but one hours several times a day. This is achieved easily by making spending more valuable than others. Thus people tend to login in during that specific time with simple action to perform rather than large intense effort which make people tired and boring.

Second, design a system which discourage people to invest large amount of money at once instead encouraging small amount of money and increase frequency of spending. For example, 25S a months have the same value of 300$ as long as he/she logging in the game everyday. This is carefully achieved by making richness of long-term goal. Thus short-term mission which can be achieved by money has much low value. This is especially effective way of keep balance of game.

Third, keep people’s attention in long-term goal to gain collective pleasure. This involves carefully design of degree of freedom. Example of Clash of clan is best for this advantages. Most people spend short and frequently period playing the game. While in the top ranking of the world. One can play more than 8 hours a day in order to achieved more resources.

important terms in one systematic design picture

Game of Metal Walz time restriction strategies (a game of collection tanks similar to Kantai collection)

- Double time restriction: oil is needed in order do mission; it is regenerate 40/h; Repair Liquid is needed to repair tank. Reqair Liquid is needed when tank is at low maintaneness(100-0) after several action performed. Regenerate 40/h
- richness of long-term goal which promote long-term pleasure;colletction type design. kantai idea of model.
- Two game currency system: silver is normal game currency, and Gold is when people invest money. Just like other games, the currency system can be much flexible.

characteristics of new

strategy

TS means the design should assign time more direct value in order to make the game more sustainable. For common example, online games often give player bonus according to their long online time in the game. TS can be concluded into three aspects:

- transfer time into direct game currency: (exchange happens directly between online time and game currency, for example: 100 hours online time for one bonus, mission or equipment. Encourage people to stay loyalty by directly give value of time spending.
- making specific time more valuable than other time: To encourage people to stay online by specific time, it tries to cultivate people’s habit of login the game more frequently. For example, special simple mission may appears 12:00am everyday. Customers will gain bonus by almost no effort input.
- waiting time value: encourage people to merely log into the game after certain interval(for examples, every one hours players get a chance of lottery). This requires only a click time, thus let player also value their waiting time, making players log into the game more frequently.