

Testing with PlaytestCloud let ZeptoLab perfect the difficulty curve of Om Nom: Run

How a single session playtest helped the Om Nom: Run team improve gameplay and set them on the path for iterative playtesting resulting in a 50% D1 retention.

ENDLESS RUNNER GAMING

ZeptoLab is a global game company best known for the hit Cut the Rope series. They have been using PlaytestCloud since 2016 and because of the success of their past playtest findings, PlaytestCloud has become a permanent tool in their arsenal for testing ideas, concepts, and new games.

Building on the success of the Cut the Rope series, ZeptoLab has created multiple spin-off games using the themes and characters of Cut the Rope. They decided to dive into the endless runner genre with Om Nom: Run. In this game, Om Nom, the iconic candy-loving monster from the original series, runs through the streets of colorful Nomville alongside his friends. While running, the player has to avoid crashing into oncoming obstacles by swiping left and right to move between running lanes or by swiping up and down to jump over or slide under obstacles.

The Om Nom: Run development team was led by Project Manager Liudmila Pashina. Liudmila knows the value of playtesting with PlaytestCloud – in her words “PlaytestCloud is cheaper and faster to use than running focus groups”. As Liudmila and her team were in the late stages of development and had an almost completed product, they ran a 15-minute single session playtest with her target audience as a final check.





DIFFICULTY CURVES

Throughout the development process, the team was struggling with finding the right game balance. While helpful, company-internal playtests the team conducted previously weren't able to provide the actual target audience, because the testers were too invested in the game's success and had biased opinions. To get an unbiased view into the player experience, their playtest with PlaytestCloud provided an easy and swift check of whether their game was ready to go into global launch.

As the playtest videos came in, Liudmila and her team were met with a troublesome surprise: the playtest revealed that the game had a major structural problem with the difficulty curves. Most players were unable to last more than 5 seconds before hitting an obstacle and having to start over. This was despite players being familiar with endless runner games! Thus the team decided to invest more time into updates and test the game as much as they could to improve its design.

THE RESULTS

During the next 6 months Om Nom: Run decreased the density of obstacles in the game. As they worked on re-doing the levels, they would continuously test these new levels with players from their target audience on PlaytestCloud. During this 6 month iterative testing period, they were able to find the balance between the fun and playability of the game and making the levels challenging and engaging for the players.

"We had a feeling in the back of our head originally that something was wrong with our game. So we were glad to have tested with PlaytestCloud in order to pinpoint the issues before releasing the game. The main value we always get out of using PlaytestCloud is user experience. Our method is to always watch what the player does using the touch indicators on the videos and listen with a critical ear to what the players are saying."

With ZeptoLab's iterative testing approach, they were able to fix the difficulty curves level-by-level while simultaneously testing the newly developed levels. The success of this playtesting campaign greatly assisted the redevelopment of the game. Once launched, Om Nom: Run received over 5 million downloads within the first month alone and currently boasts of a 50%+ day one retention.



Ready to try playtesting out for yourself?

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