

Multi-session Testing allows Kolibri Games to test methods to increase player retention

KOLIBRI CHOSE TO RUN A MULTI-SESSION PLAYTEST BECAUSE IT CLOSELY MATCHES HOW PLAYERS INTERACT WITH CAUSAL GAMES LIKE IDLE MINER TYCOON

IDLE GAMING

Kolibri Games is a Berlin-based mobile gaming studio that aspires to be the most player-oriented mobile gaming company in the world. The studio is best known for its two marquee games Idle Miner Tycoon and Idle Factory Tycoon which have been seen as a leader in the industry with its 104 million downloads and 160 content updates in the last four years. Their success has not gone unnoticed, as they were recently acquired by Ubisoft.

Over 50% of Kolibri's revenue comes from in-game advertising. However, as they seek "to be the most player-oriented mobile gaming company in the world", their games focus on opt-in advertising over forced advertising. With this optional revenue method, Kolibri Games needs to retain its players as much as possible and make watching ads a worthwhile experience.

The team at Kolibri asked us to assist them with their game Idle Miner Tycoon. Idle Miner Tycoon is an Idle game where players are put in charge of a mining company and have to instruct the workforce and automate the workflow in order to mine the most resources possible.





PLAYER RETENTION

Since the launch of the game in 2016, they have realized that if they get a player to the point of the game where they build their 2nd mine shaft, the chance of this player churning reduces dramatically. Additionally, the first interaction with an ad in the game is when players log in to their second session. So if players don't get to that point it's a loss – especially with those players who were acquired through paid user acquisition.

With this goal in mind, the team set out to create a playtest with the goal of seeing how they can get more players to the point where they build their 2nd mine shaft. They chose to run a multi-session playtest because it more closely matches how players will interact with casual games like Idle Miner Tycoon - multi-session playtests are broken up into small interactions with breaks in the middle.

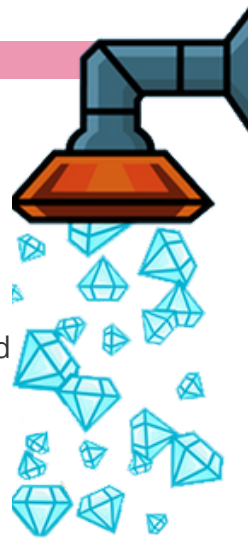
Within this framework, Kolibri worked with us to design a multi-session playtest to see where players get stuck on their journey to their 2nd mine shaft. They decided to place a PlaytestCloud order of seven players who would play the game for three 15 minute sessions, taking a two-hour break in between each session. Multi-session playtests are broken up into short interactions with longer breaks in between, making them an ideal fit for a game like Idle Miner Tycoon.

THE RESULTS

As the results came in, it became very clear to the team that players were getting stuck in a bottleneck and unintentionally slowing down their progression and gameplay until the gameplay was so slow it lost its appeal. To move players along in the game, players need to upgrade the three “choke points”: 1.) The miners who collect the materials, 2.) The elevators which bring the materials to the surface, 3.) The warehouse which collects the materials and converts them to coins.

Players were only upgrading the mines which allowed more materials to be extracted, but they were not upgrading the elevators which would transport the materials out of the mine, creating a bottleneck.

They found that after adding a contextual tutorial that reminds the players to upgrade these chokepoints, this problem was reduced dramatically. By having added contextual tutorials to show players how to speed up the entire operation by upgrading every part of it, they have also reinforced the core gameplay, without which the players would not be able to continue this game long term. This ultimately led to more players reaching the 2nd mine shaft checkpoint, reducing churn and the number of negative reviews.



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