LIQUID&GRIT

RPG Report

Competitive Research and Actionable Product Recommendations

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SEPTEMBER

2019

REVENUE DRIVERS

APP-WIDE TOURNAMENTS

Champion Duel in *Last Shelter: Survival*

REVENUE ANALYSIS

Revenue was +32% and downloads were +18% WoW in *Last Shelter: Survival,* after the release of Champion Duel.

Last Shelter: Survival

Revenue — Downloads
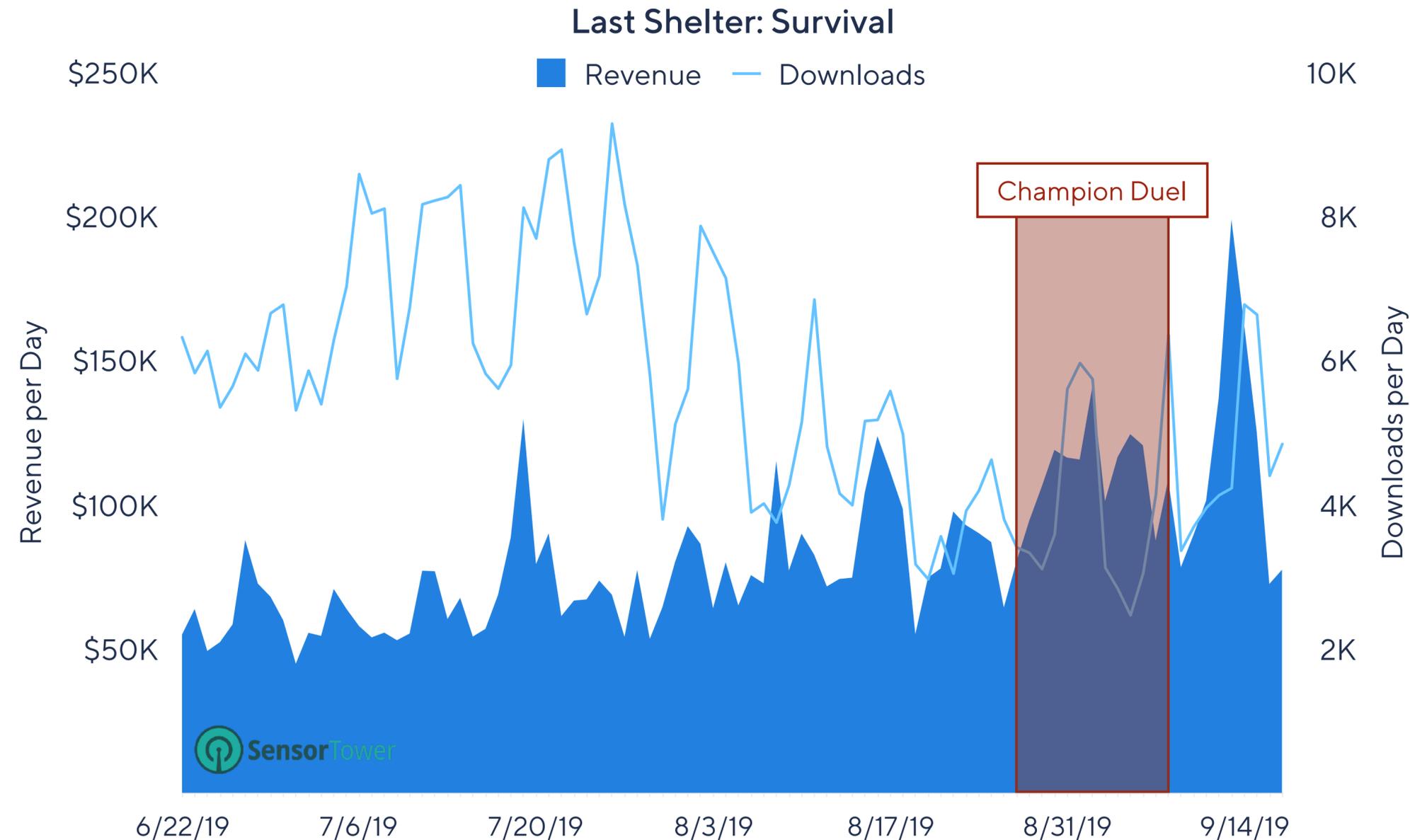
Champion Duel

Releases during the event

8/4–9/26 | Doomsday Conquest club event
• 8/27, 8/29, 8/31, 9/1 | Sub-club event
8/26–9/8 | Champion Duel competition event
8/27, 8/29, 9/3–9/4 | Zombie Siege Defense club event
8/29 | $9.99 Resource Hot Sale659 #9 (NPR*)
8/30 |
• $19.99 Resource Hot Sale704 #9 (NPR)
• $9.99 Resource Hot Sale245 #10 (NPR)
9/2 | App update: "Champion Duel"
9/2 |
• $9.99 Resource Hot Sale659 #8 (NPR)
• $9.99 Resource Hot Sale342 #9 (NPR)
9/3 | $4.99 Resource Hot Sale299 #10 (NPR)
9/3 | $0.99 Some Diamonds #10 (NPR)
9/6 |
• $4.99 Resource Hot Sale13 moved +1 to #4
• $19.99 Resource Hot Sale704 #8 (NPR)
• $9.99 Resource Hot Sale245 #9 (NPR)

* NPR = Not previously ranked

Graph data is iOS U.S. only.

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FEATURE TEARDOWN

This game-wide PvP tournament event lets players use any unlocked heroes and troops. The maximum number of troops automatically deploy for each hero and any damage taken by players does not persist beyond the event.

Details

- At the beginning of the week, players sign up to compete in the event (1).
- The first stage is a 10-round, triple-elimination competition within each kingdom.
  - Kingdoms are called "states" in *Last Shelter: Survival*.
  - A participation reward is given to all players who enter the tournament, with additional rewards for wins.
- Each round, players select 3 heroes and 3 troop types (2 and 3).
  - Players can select any unlocked hero or troop type.
  - Each hero is always assigned the maximum number of troops, regardless of how many troops players own.
  - Players can edit their formations and equipment between rounds (4 and video).
  - Heroes and troops remain available and undamaged *outside* of the event.
- The top 4 players from each kingdom enter a championship stage (5 and video).
  - Rewards in this stage are based on a player's rank (6).
  - Players can bet on others' matches during this stage.
  - The winner earns 2 points toward the Kingdom vs. Kingdom Clash of Zones event.

Quickly find more images and videos
• See the Champion Duel Library for more images and videos.

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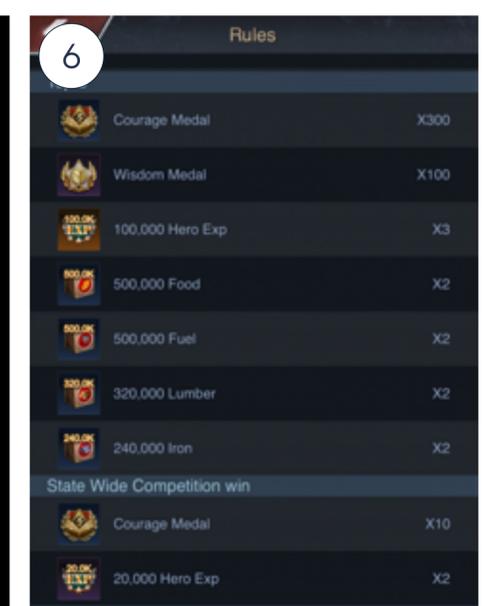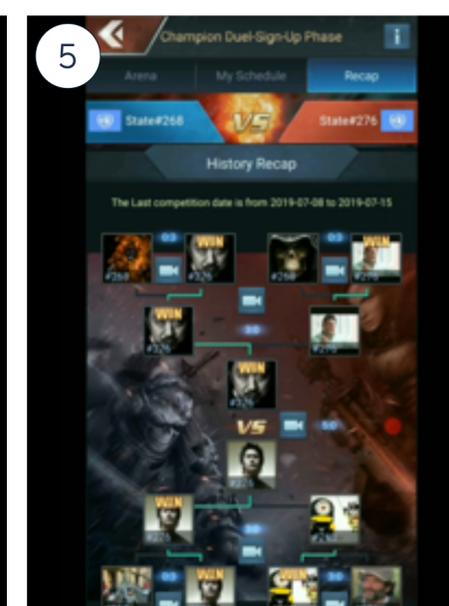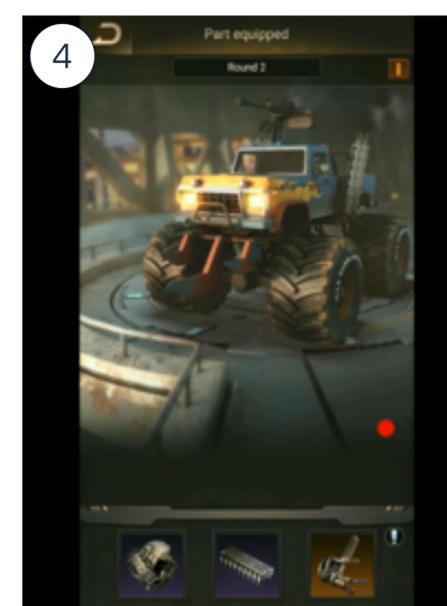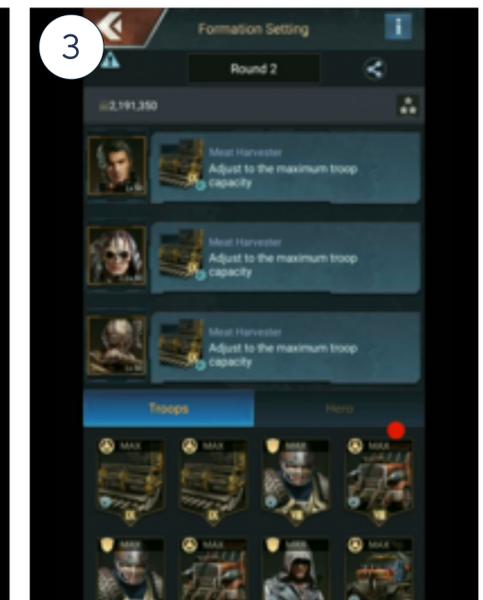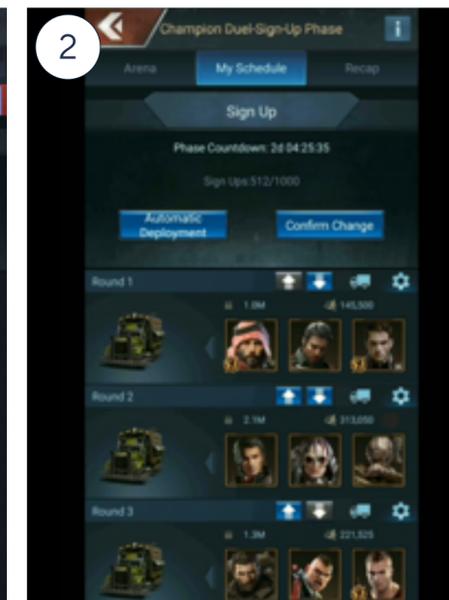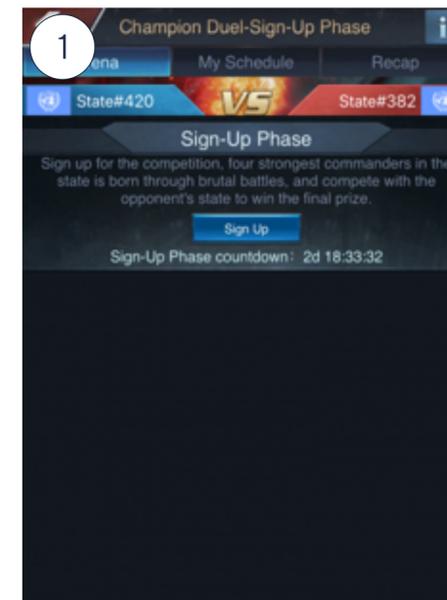
IMPLEMENTATION INSIGHTS

Release an event system that lets players test new formations in a risk-free, yet competitive, environment.

Product Recommendations

- **Release events that let players practice new formations.** In Champion Duel, players can edit their formations and equipment between rounds. The heroes and troops players use are not damaged or occupied *outside the event*.
- **Reward players for participation, wins, and rank to create a more precise reward system.**
  - In Champion Duel, players are rewarded for *wins* in the first stage of the tournament (1).
  - In contrast, *Empires & Puzzles: RPG Quest*'s Knights of Avalon only gives rewards for participation and rank (2).
- **Introduce special rules, like maximizing troop counts, to create novelty and showcase the benefits of progressing.** In Champion Duel, troop carriers are always equipped with the maximum number of troops, *even if players do not own that many*. This adds variety and lets players experience stronger formations.
- **Design certain features specifically for whales to drive top-line revenue.** Only whales can win the Champion Duel. They must sign up, play the app on specific days, rank in the top 4 for their kingdom, *and* beat the champions from other kingdoms (3).

Research Insights

- **Social players gravitate towards groups, regardless of the activity.** This insight is based on research of 270K players. Players who like group competitions are interested in *any* group-based mechanics, including social interactions (Source: Competition Is Not The Opposite of Community).

Easily read more insights
• Review previously-released Revenue Drivers in the Wiki Tool.
• Search information by a specific mechanic and type, like competition events.
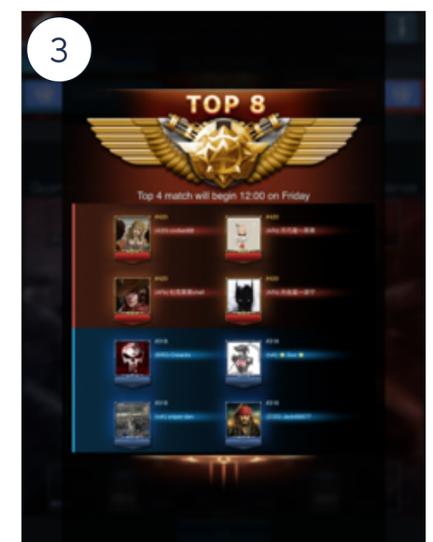
CHALLENGE EVENTS WITH COMPETITIONS

Challenge Event in *Empires & Puzzles: RPG Quest*

REVENUE ANALYSIS

Empires & Puzzles: RPG Quest revenue was +162% and downloads –8% WoW after the most recent release of Knights of Avalon, a reskinned version of the Challenge Event.

Details
- The Challenge Event was first announced in the 8/28/17 release notes.
- Knights of Avalon was first announced in the 1/4/18 release notes.

Empires & Puzzles: RPG Quest

Graph data is iOS U.S. only.
xWoxW = X weeks over X weeks.

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FEATURE TEARDOWN

During this event, players attempt to earn the highest score within a difficulty tier. Players can replay any stage to improve their score.

Details
- Players can enter one of 3 difficulty tiers—rare, epic, and legendary.
- There are 15 stages within each tier (new to the 9/4 release) (1).
- Higher tiers allow players to use more powerful heroes and items (video).
- Stages are scored based on enemies killed, completion speed, remaining health, and continues used (2 and 3).
- Stages can be replayed for a better score.
- Players are ranked on tier-specific leaderboards (4).
- Players can spend gems to summon event-exclusive heroes (5).
  - Event-exclusive heroes also appear as enemies.
- At the end of the event, players receive rewards and Challenge Coins (an event-specific currency) for completing tiers and ranking on the leaderboard (6).
  - Challenge Coins can be exchanged for an Event Summon (see this image).
- The completion reward is still given to players if the tier is finished *after the event ends* (new to the 9/4 release).

Quickly find more information in the Feature Database
....
- See the Knights of Avalon Library for more images and videos.
- See the Challenge Events Update Library for more details on 9/4 changes.

IMPLEMENTATION INSIGHTS

Boost an event's revenue or engagement by adding an event-specific currency. Then, extend the event's shelf life with replay mechanics.

Product Recommendations

- **Add an event-specific currency to successful features to drive engagement and spend.** In the 9/4 release, *Empire & Puzzles* added an event-specific soft currency (a currency that cannot be purchased) to increase engagement. To drive revenue, allow players to purchase the event-specific currency directly.

- **Reward *all* player engagement and extend the shelf life of the event with mastery rewards.** Reward players for replaying stages by offering bonuses that have minimal impact on the economy, like badges (see Quest Events in the Wiki Tool for an example). In Knights of Avalon, players still earn rewards for completing a tier *even after* the event ends—a change made in the 9/4 release.

- **Include a jackpot mechanic within the completion reward to increase the percentage of players that complete a tier.** In the final round of *POP! Slots*' tournament feature, Win Zone, players win a multiplier for points earned during the tournament. This multiplier incentivizes players to complete all the rounds (see image 1 and the Multi-Round Tournaments Wiki page).
  - To make competitions more volatile, add multiplier mechanics to rank scores.
  - To keep competitions skills-based, add jackpot mechanics to the completion reward.

- **Tailor each feature's UI design to the target audience's level of engagement.** For growth features, *Empires & Puzzles*' clear and colorful design style creates a welcoming experience for most players (2). For mid-core players, use a UI that is clean but content-focused, like in *Raid: Shadow Legends* (3). If targeting hardcore players, focus on numbers and glory, like in *Clash of Kings* (4).
  - Review more RPG Leaderboard and Competition features in the Library Tool.
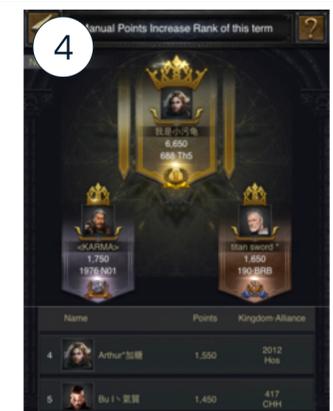
Easily read previously-released Insights in the Feature Database

- To make this challenge event less competitive, consider using a mini-game progress system (see the Mini-Adventures Puzzle in the Wiki Tool or the Appendix for an analysis of *AFK Arena*'s quest feature Voyage of Wonders).

NEW CONTENT

CONTENT RELEASES

RPG > Content > Abilities, Equipment, Heroes

8/21 | Hero Satrana — *AFK Arena* hero (1)

8/21 | Hero Antandra — *AFK Arena* hero

8/21 | Hero Vivian — *Epic Seven* hero (2)

8/21 | Dignus Orb Artifact — *Epic Seven* equipment

8/30 | Final Fantasy V New Units — *Final Fantasy Brave Exvius* heroes

8/19 | Kaito — *Final Fantasy Brave Exvius* hero

8/2 | Neverending Hope — *Final Fantasy Brave Exvius* hero

7/31 | Radiant Lightning — *Final Fantasy Brave Exvius* hero

8/26 | Light Gemstones — *Guns of Glory* equipment

8/28 | Hegemony Set — *King of Avalon: Dragon Warfare* equipment

8/14 | Orange Heroes — *King of Avalon: Dragon Warfare* heroes

8/6 | Fantastic Four Heroes — *MARVEL Strike Force* heroes (3)

8/23 | New Champions and Buffs — *Raid: Shadow Legends* heroes and abilities

8/12 | Excruciator and Veil Buffs — *Raid: Shadow Legends* hero and abilities

8/8 | Dwarves Faction — *Raid: Shadow Legends* heroes (4)

8/26 | Commander Edward of Woodstock — *Rise of Kingdoms* hero

8/22 | Commander Tomyris — *Rise of Kingdoms* hero (5)

8/23 | Clone Troopers Rework — *Star Wars: Galaxy of Heroes* heroes

8/1 | Vulture Droid — *Star Wars: Galaxy of Heroes* hero

8/28 | Demon and Gargoyle — *Summoners War* heroes (6)
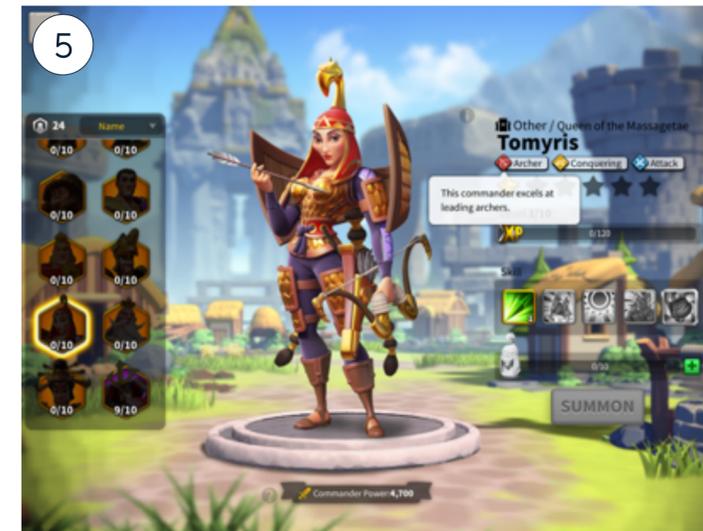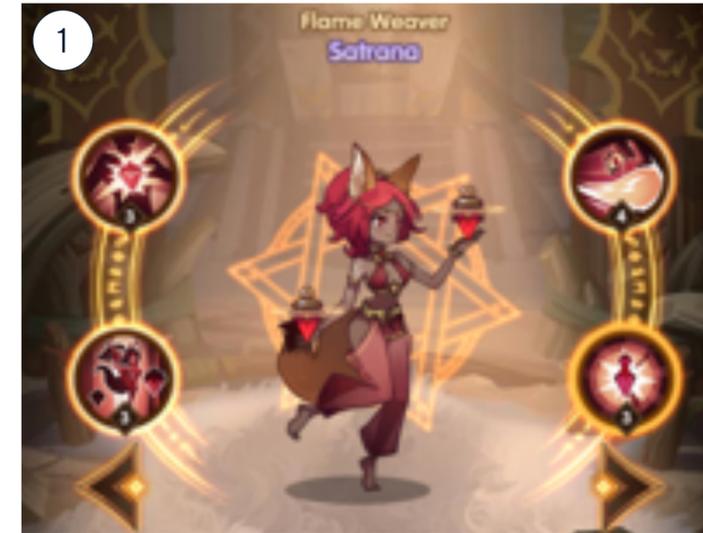
MARKET WATCH

NOTABLE RELEASES I

| App	Library	Description

AFK Arena	**The Lost Sigils** competition event	• Players use heroes from different factions to win battles.
		• Battles award faction-specific sigils.
		  • Sigils are used to purchase heroes, items, and other soft currency (1).
		  • Sigils expire at the end of the event.
		• Players can win up to six battles per day and hire up to three mercenary heroes from friends.

	Champions of Esperia rewards event	• In this 44-day event, players attempt to defeat a boss to earn Heroic Merits. • Acquiring Heroic Merits unlocks tiered boosts and currency rewards (2).
Clash of Kings	**Mysterious Sea** competition feature	• In a pre-battle stage, players collect resources and kill monsters to earn kingdom-wide buffs and individual rewards. • Once the battle starts, all 8 kingdoms compete on a single battlefield (3). • The event ends when a kingdom occupies the Marine Throne for a specified amount of time.
Epic Seven	**Epic Pass** challenge feature	• Players complete Epic Pass tasks, make store purchases, and spend soft currency to increase their season rank (4). • Player can purchase an Epic Pass upgrade to earn better rewards.
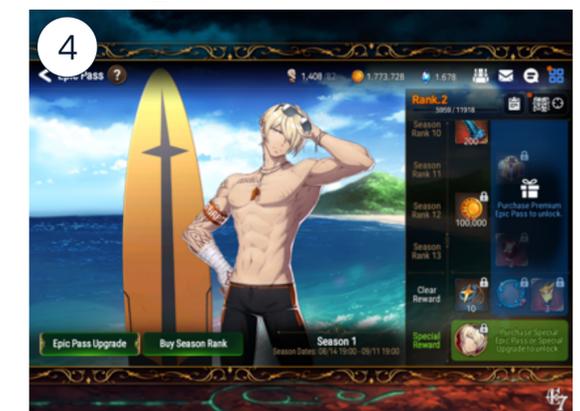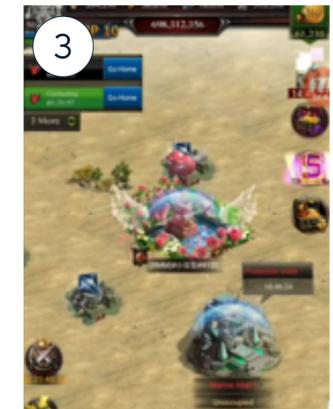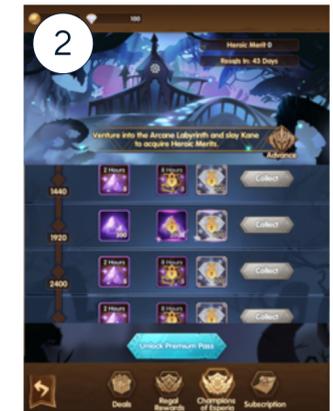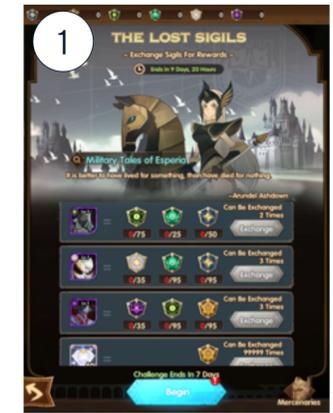
NOTABLE RELEASES II

App	Library	Description

Epic Seven	**Hall of Trials** challenge feature	• Players receive a new boss challenge each week (1).
		   • The challenge can be attempted only 3 times per week.
		   • There is an unlimited number of practice battles.
		• Beating the boss awards currency that can be used to purchase Exclusive Equipment.

Fire Emblem Heroes	**Lost Lore** missions event	• Players send pairs of heroes to scout locations, recover lore lines, and earn rewards (2). • Players can continue to scout completed locations to earn additional rewards. • Completing all 4 locations unlocks a final battle. • Finishing the final battle awards a story and game art.
MARVEL Strike Force	**Alliance Leagues** clubs feature	• Player alliances earn trophies by winning wars (3). • This feature is a "Work in Progression" and not yet released.
	MARVEL 80th Anniversary Celebration multi-event	• This anniversary event includes a daily login challenge, a new mission, a battle event, a collection feature with milestone rewards, and daily sales (4).
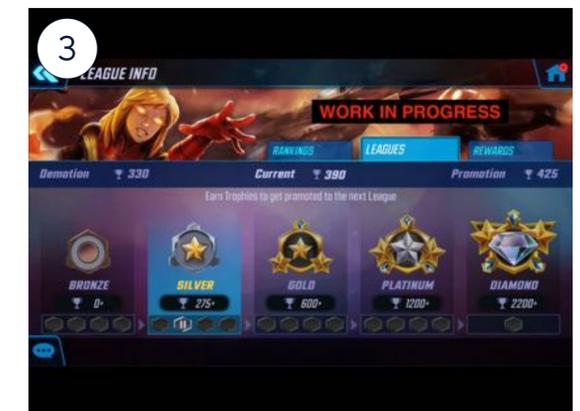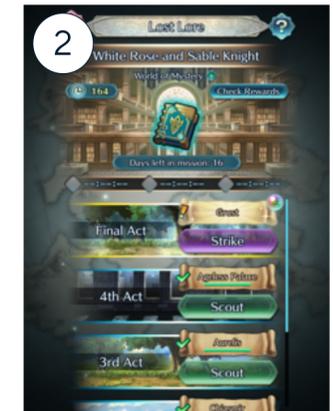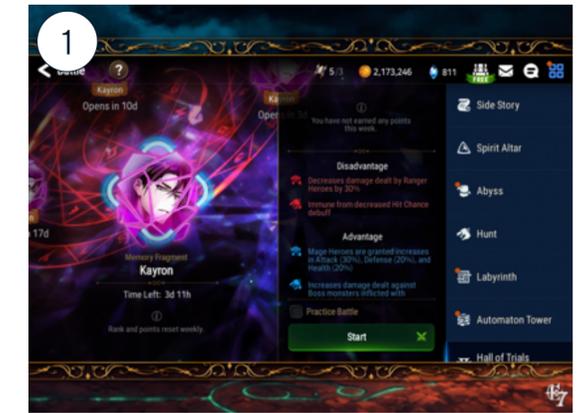
NOTABLE RELEASES III

App	Library	Description
Raid: Shadow Legends	**Affinity Dungeons Open for Gems** quest feature	• Players can spend gems to unlock closed dungeons for 24 hours (1).
	Spider Tournament, **Fire Knight Tournament**, and **Dragon Tournament** competition events	• Players earn tournament points by completing dungeons (2). • Both ranking and individual milestone rewards can be earned based on tournament points.
Rise of Kingdoms	**Equipment System** collection feature	• A new blacksmith building allows players to produce materials and craft equipment. • Players can collect materials and blueprint fragments by winning battles. • Players with a completed blueprint and the required materials can craft equipment by spending coins (3).
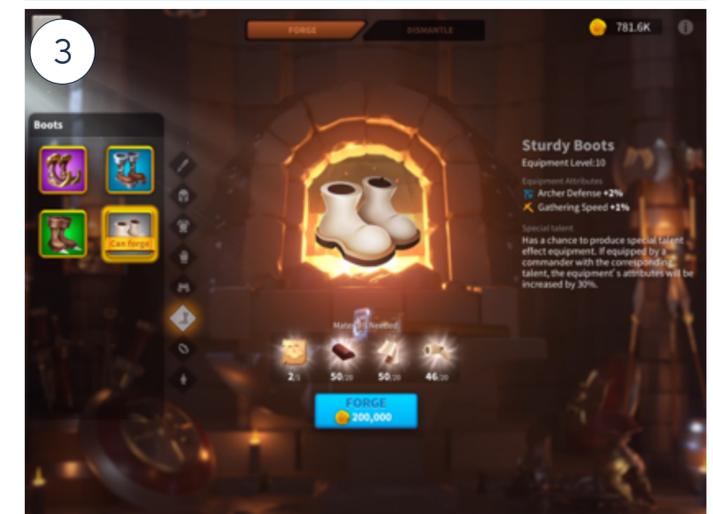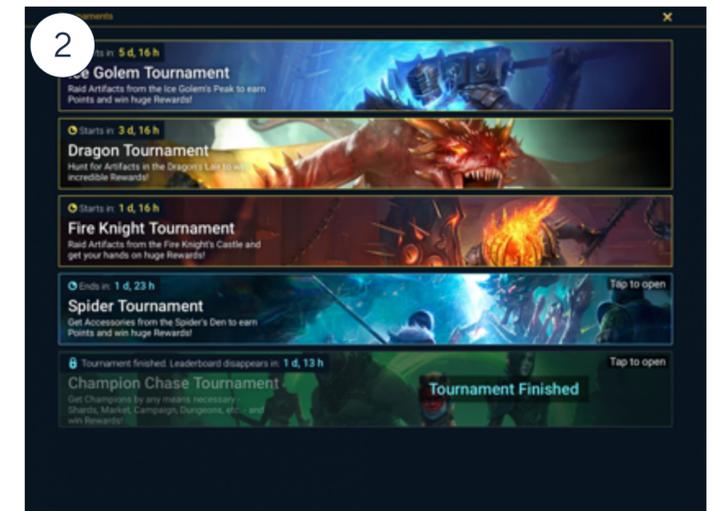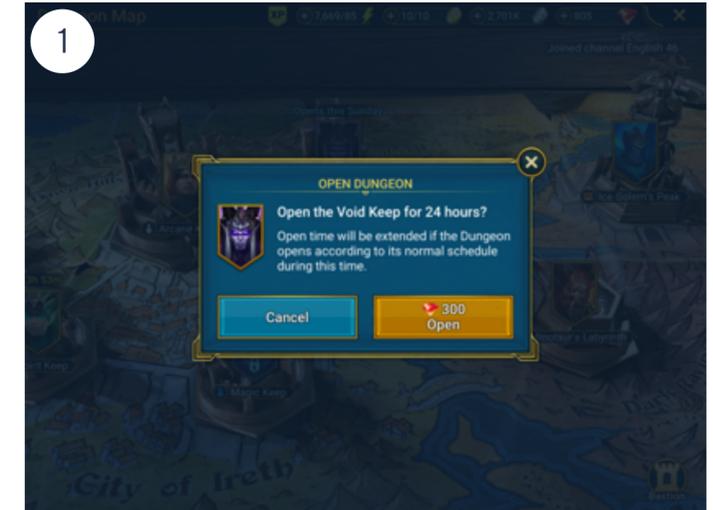
Quickly review all features and events

• Filter the Library Tool by month and year to see all the new releases.

APPENDIX

MINI-ADVENTURE PUZZLES

Voyage of Wonders in *AFK Arena*

REVENUE ANALYSIS

AFK Arena's revenue increased +24% WoW and +16% 2Wo2W after the release of Voyage of Wonders. Downloads were up +12% and +19% during those time periods.

AFK Arena

■ Revenue　— Downloads

Voyage of Wonders

Revenue per Day: $200K, $150K, $100K, $50K

Downloads per Day: 15K, 10K, 5K

5/23/19　6/6/19　6/20/19　7/4/19　7/18/19　8/1/19　8/15/19

SensorTower

Graph data is iOS U.S. only.
xWoxW = X weeks over X weeks.

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FEATURE TEARDOWN

Voyage of Wonders is a new building that gives players intermittent access to limited-time quest events. During each event, players fight battles and solve puzzles to progress across a board and earn rewards.

Details

- Players access the Voyage of Wonders quest feature on the world map (1).
- The feature contains limited-time quest events, like The Forgotten Mine and The Lucent Vault.
- In The Forgotten Mine, players fight battles to move across a board (2).
- The board is a puzzle that players must solve to earn rewards (3 and video).
  - The enemy's strength is determined by a player's level at the start of the event.
  - Hero and enemy health does not refresh after each battle.
- Players can restart each quest an unlimited number of times (4 and video).

Feature References

- This feature is similar to *AFK Arena*'s Arcane Labyrinth and Peaks of Time.

Quickly find more images and videos of a feature

- Download screenshots and watch videos in the Voyage of Wonders Library.
  - The start of the adventure and map puzzles video.
  - The battle, battle rewards selection, and map movement video.
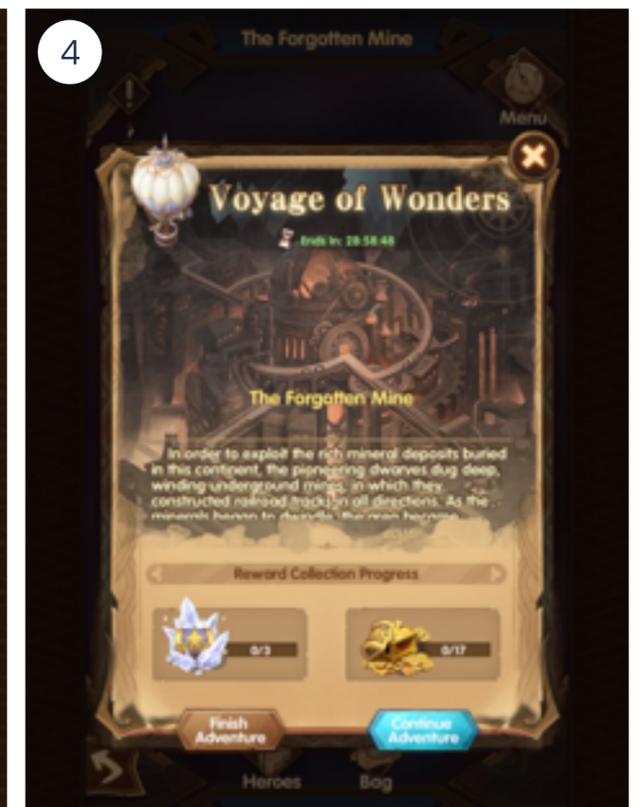
IMPLEMENTATION INSIGHTS

Consider implementing mini-games with core gameplay inspired by either classic games or other genres. Then, use three metrics to improve your event calendar freshness.

Product Recommendations

- **Design the mini-game as a simplified version of a classic game or core mechanic from another genre.** This design is driving revenue in several top grossing apps in Adventure, Casino, and Puzzle genres (see image 1 and this video).
  - In Bingo Blitz, revenue increased +38% WoW after the release of a simplified slots machine (see image 2 the Wiki page Simplified Slots Machine).
  - Survey players to determine the broadest player appeal between classic games or other genres.

- **Adjust time lengths—particularly in reskins—to add an inexpensive variation to features and events.** *AFK Arena*'s three similar quest features—Arcane Labyrinth, Voyage of Wonders, and Peaks of Time—remain open for varying durations: the first for 48 hours, the second for approximately two weeks, and the third is continuously available.
  - In Casino, *House of Fun*'s event calendar includes daily, multi-day, and multi-week events. A collection event called HoF Legends 3 drove a +32% increase in baseline revenue during its 10-week period (see image 3 and HoF Legends Content Releases).

- **Know your event calendar freshness and exceed your competitors using key metrics.** An important job of an event calendar is to keep your game fresh for highly-engaged players. These metrics help determine the freshness level:
  - New events released per month: The level of new content available to players each month.
  - Total available events per day: The number of options players receive each day.
  - Unique events per week: The variation players get day over day.

Easily read more insights on any mechanic
• Review previously-released revenue drivers in the Wiki Tool.
• Find all the information on specific mechanics, like collection features.
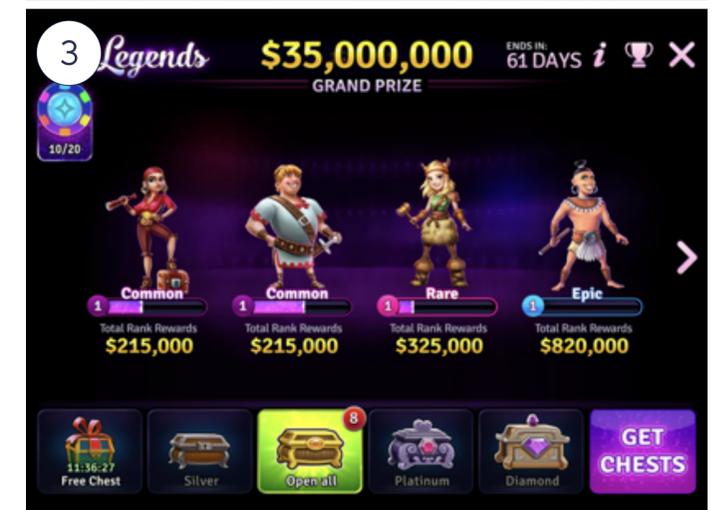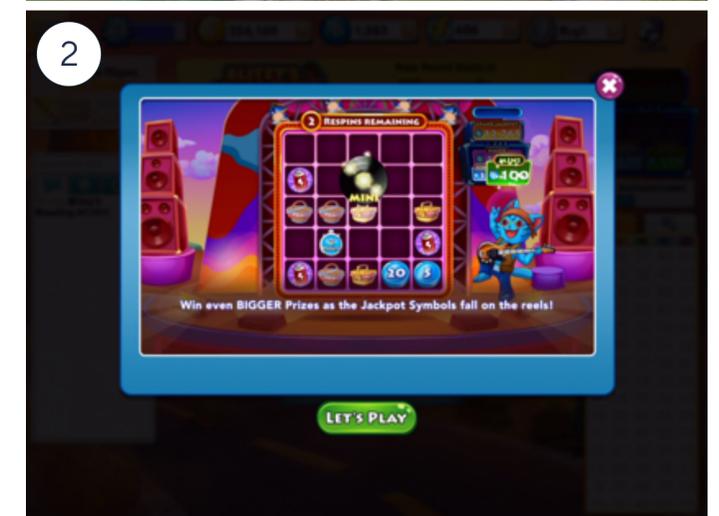
MECHANICS TAXONOMY

Family	Definitions
Accelerators	Increases the power, impact, or efficiency of play
Banks	Saves a % of spend that can be unlocked later
Bonuses	Free bonuses given to players (e.g., retention or W2E)
Challenges	Players must play, complete, and win
Clubs	A group accomplishing goals or competing with other groups
Collections	A set of items players collect (often for a completion prize)
Competitions	Players competing against other players
Conflict	Players engaging in battle with their characters
Cosmetics	Improvements or updates to the app or a feature
Currencies	Changes to currencies, economies, stores, and items
Custom Design	Options to customize aesthetics
Expansions	Additional rooms, worlds, play modes, VIP lounges, etc.
Flows	Specific flows, like the NUX, ratings, and surveys

Family	Definitions
Hazards	Level elements/blockers that make levels more difficult
Interactions	Any social feature with direct or indirect interaction
Leaderboards	Stand-alone leaderboards
Levels	Anything to do with leveling
Mini-Games	Smaller, shorter games within a game (e.g., scratcher cards)
Missions	A linear set of tasks that players must accomplish
Notices	Feature or product announcements
Other	Miscellaneous features and outliers
Profiles	Related to a player's setup, profile, settings, and controls
Purchases	Anything to do with purchases
Quests	Completing tasks to progress along a map or map-like feature
Rewards	Any reward players receive for engagement or spend (other than the bonuses family)

UTILIZE L&G'S TOOLS

Uncover new RPG trends and understand competitor investments with Liquid and Grit's tools and capabilities. Our new Matrix Tool is now live!

DATA TOOL

1. Find new trends using the Data Tool's categorization.
2. Benchmark your app's output against competitors.
3. Export data into .csv to do more in-depth analysis.

WIKI TOOL

1. Reference all Liquid and Grit's insights.
2. Find and download previous reports.
3. Uncover revenue-driving features from other genres.

LIBRARY TOOL

1. Watch videos to understand animations and flows.
2. Download images to use as design templates and spec references.
3. Check out level-locked machines and features.

MATRIX TOOL

1. Benchmark the features in your app against specific competitors.
2. Find opportunities in the market for your app's growth.
3. Design a new app concept using features inspired by different games.

PREMIUM PARTNERSHIPS

Liquid and Grit partners with these premier market research and analytics companies to infuse our reports with the most relevant and detailed gaming user personas, data, and statistics available.

Quadrant Strategies	Kinrate Analytics	Sensor Tower

Quadrant Strategies

Market Research

Quadrant Strategies website

Quadrant Strategies is a market research consultancy that uses research to help the world's most prominent technology, gaming, and entertainment companies develop strategies for building their user base, increasing user engagement and spend, and strengthening their marketing and brand plans.

We do that using a range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, including gamer segmentation and persona development, feature testing, message creation, and loyalty and engagement modeling. The work of our senior leadership goes back many years, and includes long-term engagements for console and gaming-PC hardware-makers, individual games in a range of genres, and across consoles, PCs, and mobile, and for some of the top game franchises.

Kinrate Analytics

Player Personas

Kinrate Analytics website

Kinrate Analytics offers game developers, consultants, publishers, and cloud gaming operators the best cross-platform game recommendation engine for targeted marketing, as well as a novel profiling-as-a-service solution for intelligent market segmentation and social networking.

Other services include advanced market prediction analyses for identifying emergent gaming trends and access to unique AI-enhanced data of 140 thousand game titles and 48 million game players.

The products of Kinrate Analytics have been developed in university-led research projects in collaboration of economists, psychologists, game scholars, and data scientists.

Sensor Tower

Mobile App Store Intelligence

Sensor Tower website

Sensor Tower is relied upon by financial analysts, VCs, and publishers who need to leverage data to identify the fastest growing apps, emerging markets, and more.

Clients harness Sensor Tower's suite of app intelligence tools to...

- Evaluate app economies and app vitality
- Drive organic growth with the leading App Store Optimization platform
- Get the best global download and revenue estimates for the App Store and Google Play
- Discover top creatives and better shape user acquisition strategy

"With great power comes great responsibility."

– Uncle Ben, Spiderman

LiquidandGrit.com

Brett.Nowak@LiquidandGrit.com