



Using Unity to create premium social games

Thomas Grové looks at how Quickhit Football's pay-to-play upgrade harnesses the power of Unity, and speaks to the studio working directly with the National Football League...



Quickhit Football is among a number of high profile launches this month that are using Unity to deliver a premium 3D web experience.

The title launched last year with a free-to-play Flash version and levelled up for this year's season by introducing a premium version authored in Unity – and scored the coveted NFL licence for good measure. Notably, players of both the free-to-play Flash version and the pay-to-play Unity version will be able to compete against each other.

Trevor Stricker, director of game development for *Quickhit*, explains more about the relationship between the versions, and the role Unity played.

What are your goals for Quickhit Football?

Quickhit Football makes it fun to see how different passing plays work, or how to mould your team into a potent running threat. When the NFL season starts, you have the people who casually follow a team, and then you have fans with boundless attention for everything happening in the league.

That's the great thing about football – it has broad appeal. Our goal is to be a game that all American football fans enjoy playing with each other that doesn't require you to have an expensive console or the thumb dexterity of a 12-year-old.

Equally important is what it's not; it's not a button mashing game, and it's

not a game for people looking to show off their new HDTVs. There's a long history of football games in this space, from *NFL 2K* to *Madden* to *Backbreaker*, that fans have to choose from.

Why did you decide to create a premium version in Unity?

Flash is great for getting your game out to a huge base of players without requiring an install. We have had lots of success with our flash version. But, at *Quickhit* we are creating an amazing game and we didn't want to be limited by one platform. We had to make our graphics fairly blocky in order to have enough room for all 22 players we draw on the field.

We had to ditch things like giving each player a unique number. We would love to display more information about what's happening as the play unfolds,



but we can't draw any more in Flash if we want to run on older systems. We have a large number of players who love the game we've built, but we want to make the experience as immersive as a game of this calibre can be.

With Unity we don't need to make those compromises. You can see the linebacker wrap his arms around a receiver trying to get away from him. Every player can have his own number. You can watch gameplay from various camera angles. And yet, we're still running in the browser. The quality of the experience is going to wow people.

What's unique about your business model?

We will always have a free version of the game and the ability for user to earn rewards through gameplay. With Unity, we are taking it to the next level by

giving users the option of a better experience. A good analogy is TV. Broadcast television is free and a lot of people like it and watch it, but people upgrade because they want HBO.

To my knowledge, a premium tier to a free game has not been attempted in this way before. We want to give our users a compelling reason to upgrade. We are trying to do something more substantial than just adding fuzzy hats or tinted glasses to your avatar.

Do you see what you're doing as setting a trend for the industry?

Social games are evolving into more compelling experiences, which is a trend *Quickhit* certainly falls into. Millions of people are spending lots of time playing social games. While some in the industry are still sticking their nose up at the idea of Facebook or free-to-play games, a lot of us see it as a new frontier. There is a lot of learning taking place – players are discovering there are more compelling things than a grind, and developers are learning how to engage a player a whole lot sooner.

Our team has substantial credibility from games like *Madden*, *NFL 2K*, and *NBA 2K*. Considering there's a certain lead designer from the *Civilization* franchise, of all things, now making social games, we're clearly not alone. I think the future holds a lot more social games from huge publishers and independent developers.

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