

Game Hive

Case study





“Hands down the best ad format is rewarded video because it’s un-intrusive and extends the player’s lifetime value (LTV). If there was one video ad network we would integrate, it would be Unity Ads.”

Mark Wang, Co-Founder and Head of BD & Operations

Introducing... Game Hive

Game Hive is a Toronto-based game developer pioneering mobile games with high quality design, programming, and art. Combining a unique element of interactivity and connectivity, they have a razor sharp focus on creating truly unique mobile gaming experiences. They have more than 100 million total downloads across iOS and Android worldwide. Priding themselves as an early adopter of Unity Ads, their Made With Unity smash hit Tap Titans has become synonymous in the mobile gaming industry and helped pioneer the ‘view-to-play’ gamification experiences. The Unity Engine has helped the Game Hive team focus on what they do best. What’s more, Unity Ads has enabled them to monetize Tap Titans in a way that actually increased player engagement and lifetime value.



The challenge:

Monetizing in the short-term

Game Hive has been pioneering the new era of mobile gaming since 2008. Starting with just Mark Wang and his co-founders, Chris Doan and Steven Wang, the company has rapidly grown into a thriving free-to-play game leader. Initially, the company used xcode for over three years, but as downloads continued to pour in, this software became increasingly limiting. As a result, it became challenging to develop solid games. "We simply make games the way we dreamed about them when we were kids," said M Wang. "To continue this dream and support our growth, we reviewed a few game engine alternatives like Coronas and Cocos2dx, but nothing came close to what we needed."

Not only did Game Hive have to deal with issues like using two different code bases, they also faced a monetization challenge. At that time, the most common monetization strategy was to fill the game interface with full screen ads, but that just didn't feel right for Tap Titans. What's more, M Wang emphasizes how interstitial ads actually went against Game Hive's whole brand and approach to gaming.

"The old free-to-play model of shoving ads down a player's throat didn't fit our strategy. We care about the player experience and knew from day one that our success depended on not sending players heading for the hills." M Wang stated, "Sure, for games that have natural pause sessions, interstitials aren't the worst option, but if we implemented that for Tap Titans, we'd essentially be tricking our players into tapping on an ad. It might have short-term gains, but over time, it would mean a long term loss."

Sticking to their vision does, however, require a strong development platform. And that's where Unity came in.

The solution:

A seamless gameplay ad experience

Luckily Unity provided a one-stop shop. In 2010, Game Hive turned to Unity as the engine to build Beat the Boss, and they have been thrilled with the results ever since. Not only did this decision take a lot of the hassle out of developing their games, it also allowed them to integrate video ads with uninterrupted gameplay.

"Unity is the industry's standard for building games across platforms, and their wrapper of services, from easy Asset Store plug-ins, to Ads & Analytics, allows us to focus on what we do best - making amazing games," said M Wang.

As an early adopter of Unity Ads monetization platform in 2014, Game Hive helped pioneer the 'view-to-play' gamification experience. It allowed them to integrate ads into the game story by offering a value exchange for a large amount of in-game currency or skills. They built a gameplay mechanism where a little fairy appears, and when the player taps it, they're presented with an option to watch a video in return for a huge game-progression burst. Once players are used to clicking the fairy, they're presented with an ad value-exchange allowing them to unlock the feature.

"By making ads part of the game itself, we're literally conditioning our players with habit forming interactions."

Mark Wang, Co-Founder and Head of BD & Operations

“After turning off interstitials and designing rewarded video ads around the gameplay, ARPU from Unity Ads has been phenomenal.”

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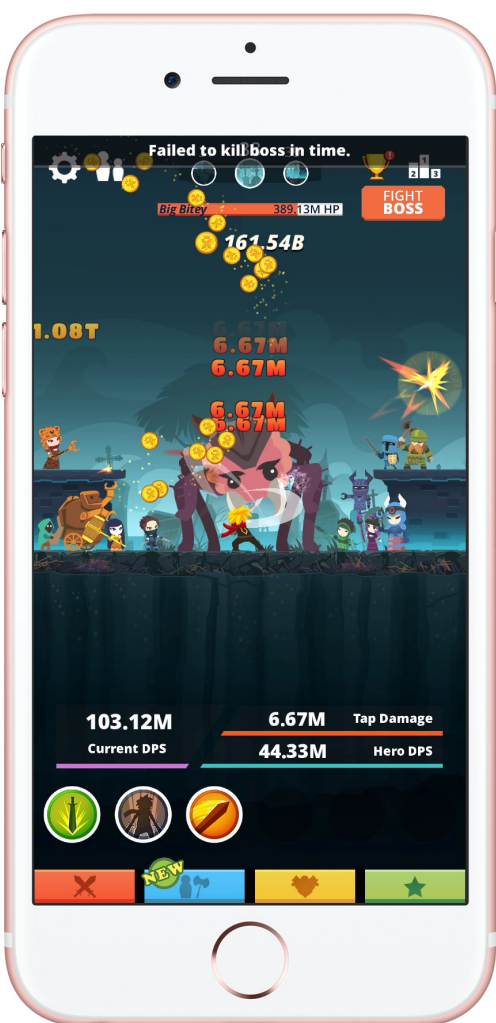
The results: Sustained long term gains

The Unity engine, the community surrounding it and all the associated services, including Unity Ads, have exponentially decreased Game Hive's time to market. At the same time, it enables them to ensure a consistent level of quality in the game experience right down to the ads. And that increases the lifetime value of their players.

Doan added, “Unity was one of the best decisions we ever made.” And M Wang continued, “With their unlimited supply of tools, Unity unlocks our potential by allowing us to focus on building amazing games without all the hassles. There's no other engine that lets you port over a game from iOS to Android in one click, making it ready to ship the next day.”

Before Unity, Game Hive had been making most of their money via interstitial ads. “We quickly learned that it's not about serving ads two minutes into the game and focusing solely on eCPM. Rather than focusing on short-term gains, we instead maximize our players' lifetime value (LTV) that pay off in the long run,” Doan concluded.

“After turning off interstitials and designing rewarded video ads around the gameplay, ARPU from Unity Ads has been phenomenal,” concluded M Wang. “By encouraging players to opt-in to watch an ad, we've had no loss of retention. In fact, we've seen incremental retention increases, engagement is better than ever, and our players are demanding to watch more ads because they can get to parts of the game they couldn't before.”



About Unity Technologies

Unity Technologies is the creator of Unity, a flexible and high-performance end-to-end development platform used to create rich interactive 3D and 2D experiences. Unity's powerful graphics engine and full-featured editor serve as the foundation to develop beautiful games or apps and easily bring them to multiple platforms: mobile devices, home entertainment systems, personal computers, and embedded systems. Unity also offers solutions and services for creating games, boosting productivity, and connecting with audiences including the Unity Asset Store, Unity Cloud Build, Unity Game Performance Reporting, Unity Analytics, Unity Ads, and Unity Everyplay. Unity Technologies serves over 1 million monthly active developers including large publishers, indie studios, students and hobbyists around the globe. For more information, visit: <http://unity3d.com/ads>.