

Playtesting

Wallther, don't let the wall falter!

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1 Structure

1.1 Target Audience

To fit the target audience of our game, the selection of testers was comprised of relatives, friends and other peers with an interest and experience in video games.

1.2 Methodology

The sessions were done individually by the team members. Each session was done with one tester on one of our team members laptop. The testers were told about the aim of the testing phase and that we're not measuring their performance. Other than that we wanted to test how well our tutorial picks the player up from zero and left the testers in the dark, thanking them for their time and handing them our alpha release.

During playing we tried to leave the testers to the experience, only answering questions if an unexpected issue arose or they wanted to know technical details.

After playing through the tutorial and one level of our game, we gave them a short questionnaire of 10 questions, inquiring about how certain aspects felt and what the players liked and didn't like. Finally, we then made sure to thank the testers for their time and valuable feedback.

1.3 Questionnaire

This is the structure of the questionnaire that was given to the testers after their playthrough.

1. How clear was it to what you were supposed to do? (Rate from 1 to 5)
2. How easy did you find the character "Wallther" to control? (Rate from 1 to 5)
3. What was the most fun part of the game? (Select multiple from below)
 - (a) Rebuilding the wall
 - (b) Platforming
 - (c) Watching the battle play out
 - (d) Other: *[Text input]*
4. What part of the game frustrated you? (Text Response)
5. How clear was it to you to tell how well you were doing? (Rate from 1 to 5)
6. Did you at any point feel lost or disoriented? (Yes or No)
 - (a) If Yes: At what point did you feel lost or disoriented? (Text Response)
7. What are things you wanted to do but couldn't? (Text Response)
8. How would you rate your stress level during the game? (Rate from 1 to 5)
9. How clear were you on win- and lose condition? (Rate from 1 to 5)
10. Do you have any ideas or suggestions for us? (Text Response)

2 Responses

2.1 How clear was it to what you were supposed to do?

The majority of testers responded with 4/5 with some giving 5/5. This shows that the core concept and the design pillars are solid, making it very clear what the goal of the game is. It also shows that testers had no problem in transferring the knowledge from the tutorial to the actual game and internalizing the game loop.

2.2 How easy did you find the character "Wallther" to control?

Here the testers responded mostly with 4/5 which shows that the controls of Wallther were intuitive and what the testers expected. Some additional feedback during the playtesting suggests that the testers were thrown off by Wallther slowing down when "rubbing" against the wall or stair colliders. It was also noted in one session that the combination of the gravity and jump height values were too high. Adjusting this was perceived as a definite improvement.

2.3 What was the most fun part of the game?

The testers indicated that they enjoyed the core gameplay of rebuilding the wall the most with most testers checking that option while many also included the platforming. *Watching the battle play out* was left unchecked in the questionnaire which means that this was not a central aspect for them during the playtesting. One particular feedback indicated that the battle itself went mostly unnoticed due to the focus on keeping the wall intact. Ideally the responses for platforming would've been closer to equal with the rebuilding of the wall because it is an integral part of our game and should not be a source of frustration.

2.4 What part of the game frustrated you?

This question brought up a number of issues the testers experienced during the sessions. There were some bugs that were encountered which obviously impaired the gameplay experience such as resources not being displayed correctly making it impossible to see how often Wallther can repair before needing to replenish. The slowing down when touching walls and stairs was brought up again. The fact that Wallther is stunned for a moment when jumping from high up was frustrating for some testers as they found their momentum interrupted by it. A key point that was mentioned multiple times was that it was unclear how much health a given wall piece had and how much it would've taken to repair.

2.5 How clear was it to you to tell how well you were doing?

This seems to be an area where the game is still struggling with the majority of the testers responding with 2/5 or less. This shows that the purely diegetic approach that was taken so far is not resonating well with testers who are asking for more UI. The testers found themselves not being able to judge at a glance how many enemies are left and what the state of the wall is, leaving them confused when the victory or defeat screen appears.

2.6 Did you at any point feel lost or disoriented — At what point?

Here some testers stated that they didn't feel lost or disoriented during the playtest. Others however stated that they felt just that with one tester clarifying in the follow-up question that they initially struggled to get used to the game controls. This feeling of disorientation could be connected to the previously criticized lack of feedback from the game about how well the player is doing.

2.7 What are things you wanted to do but couldn't?

This question gave the testers the opportunity to express what they missed during their gameplay. Many responses offered suggestions to extend the game with more actions for Wallther to perform to make the game less repetitive. As the version that was locked for testing did not include any of the planned upgrades the testers were facing repetitive gameplay quickly. One suggestion was to add customization to some assets like the clothing and flags to make it more personal.

2.8 How would you rate your stress level during the game?

Here the testers were divided with almost half rating their stress level 3/5 and 4/5 respectively while some gave a 1/5. This could be related to some testers being not as familiar with gaming in general. One particular tester stated that they had next to no experience playing with a controller and found it difficult to get used to the controls. This led to them pressing the wrong buttons and thus being delayed in interacting and the repairing of the wall.

2.9 How clear were you on win- and lose condition?

This question ties in with the responses about not being able to tell how well the game is going. The clear majority of the testers gave a rating of 3/5 or lower which clearly shows again that the testers could not make great use of the diegetic information on winning and losing the game and were caught by surprised when they did win or lose.

2.10 Do you have any ideas or suggestions for us?

This question gave the testers the opportunity to freely give feedback which is listed below.

- Indicate when Wallther is close enough to interact with something
- Make the battle in the background more noticeable
- Add health bars for both the wall and the enemies
- Make UI fonts prettier (Tutorial, Victory/Defeat screen)
- Reduce saturation in the overall shading
- Customizable flags on the towers

2.11 General Sentiment

In general the testers found the game to be fun and entertaining and could see the potential of the game with the feedback implemented.

3 Changes based on the feedback

3.1 Improving Wallthers Movement

For this game to reach its full potential it is crucial that the controls feel natural and the movement feels smooth. The critique of being slowed down when "rubbing" along a wall or stairs was already received internally prior to the playtesting and will be one of the top priorities for the final release. This topic also includes fine-tuning Wallthers jump height and the gravity that is applied to him to make jumping feel smooth and not make the player have to wait for Wallther to land before being able to continue. Additionally, we will rethink the duration of the stun after long falls or if it even fits into our gameplay vision.

3.2 Better communication of how well the player is doing

A major critique we received was that it was unclear how well one is doing at a given point and that the message of having won or lost came surprising. To address this issue we will dedicate more resources before the final release to come up with more ways to communicate the state of the game to the player. Some ideas include adding camera shake at the very last moments before losing and using music that is currently in production to ramp up intensity and adjust the feeling to convey stress or success. We are still opposed to introducing a pure health bar as of now but we keep it as an option if we come to the conclusion that we find it beneficial to the diegetic approach.

3.3 Lack of Progression & Variety

Some testers commented that the game got repetitive fast. They were asking and suggesting many interesting ideas like customizing the flag of our troops, or partaking in the warfare yourself. We are confident that these needs will be catered for if we play our cards right with the Upgrade system we had regarded as a high target until now. It seems to keep players hooked the Upgrade system is necessary to make the game more replayable and enjoyable long-term. We have a few upgrades already in development that the player can strategically place in between rounds to have a reward to look forward to after every battle. The enemy will also attack with more variety, placing obstacles in Wallther's path and obstructing vision from time to time.

3.4 Rethinking our highlighting

The player can see which wall he can repair at any time by a blue highlight. While we thought this would make the game easier to read, it appeared that testers found it counter-intuitive, with the highlighting obstructing the wall segment they wanted to see. In a short additional test we found that leaving out the highlighting makes the wall health a lot easier to read. Therefore we will need to rethink the way we show the player what they can do at any time without obstructing important information. This discussion will also include how we deal with interactables and how we communicate clearly to the player what will happen when they try to interact before they press the button.

3.5 Novel features

Adding customization is something that was requested by testers and something that definitely adds to the games character. At this point in the development phase we will have to focus on the points mentioned above which will probably move this feature out of scope. Other suggested features will not be implemented simply because they don't fit our vision for the game. Those include making Wallther able to shoot at the enemy himself with a crossbow or the catapult.

4 Conclusion

The testing phase of our project opened our eyes to issues we were unaware of. We found bugs we had not known about and made interesting discoveries about how players approach our game. Most notably the communication of win- & lose condition were perceived as lackluster and our no-UI approach was met with varying amounts of appreciation with many players missing convenient (but in our opinion unimmersive) health bars or status updates. We are confident that the already in-progress implementation of our upgrade system will satisfy many tester's need for player progression and self-fulfillment if done right. Furthermore we will continue tweaking and rounding out edges to make our game an even more fun experience. The feedback about the overall concept, fun and game loop was positive, rendering us optimistic about our project and the remaining three weeks of development.