Playtesting Report
ChronoQueue

Team Team

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Playtesting Structure

Testing Procedure

For the playtesting sessions, we asked a few friends to join as participants. As our game is a multiplayer one, we played along with them; however, we acted as external neutral players that did not know the game and refrained from explaining the game. The usual playtesting session consisted of providing the controller to the player and having them start interacting with the game from the Main Menu. Then, once they start the game, they play 2-3 rounds. Reading the "How to Play" section was not required or suggested. The participants were asked to do a "Play-out-loud" testing -- They were encouraged to voice their thought process and opinions as they interacted with the game.

At the end of the playtesting session, we asked them a few more questions, including the placement of the game on the axes of Physical vs. Mental, and Chance vs. Skill.

Questions

- What was your first impression and what is your current impression?
- What was your experience like with the controls?
- What did you find to be missing from the game?
- What single thing would you change?
- Do you think the objective was clear?
- What particular choices and decisions did you make during the game?
- Did you come up with a strategy while playing?

Feedback

Menu & Navigation

Some problems were encountered in the pre game menus. The menu is navigated by controller and so each button has to be highlighted when selected. In our alpha version the highlighting was still lacking and only a small border was seen from which some players could not determine the focused button. The menus are also not navigable by the joystick on the controller which did confuse players.

The font choice is another problem when it comes to longer sentences. In our 'How to Play' menu we described the rules of our game in sentences. But on smaller monitors and ever larger ones it was still hard to read because of our font.

Rules

The main issues with the current set of game rules revolved around the player and phantom health. Specifically, it turned out to be unclear whether the player had multiple lives, and how many they would have. This makes more sense when the player doesn't have a clear idea of the health concept, as without health the game gives the impression that the players are killed with a single hit, which would make it too quick to end the game so there should be more lives. In addition, several more advanced Phantom mechanics were not clear, regardless of whether the user read the "How to Play" section or not, as these points were not discussed in that section either. These mechanics include the health of the Phantom, their spawning cycle, their damaging capabilities and so on. From a game balance perspective, the phantom spawn rate was found to be too high.

Controls

In general the feedback for our controls were good. The button layout was intuitive and fast to learn aside from the menu navigation.

Gameplay

For the gameplay we got mixed results. The movement was fun and direct and charging definitely brought an improvement to the battle. The ranged attack was the most used attack by far with the melee punch attack (heavy attack) at second place. Here we encountered the problem that the Headbutt attack and also the melee punch attack to some extent did not have the desired impact.

We asked each participant what strategy they had in mind when trying to win. Afterwards we asked if they used Phantoms as part of the strategy and here we got mixed results. Some use Phantoms to pressure enemies but we also got the feedback that it was not possible for some as they were too random.

Appearance

The appearance of the in-game assets and the look and feel of the world received primarily positive feedback. The characters and the environment were found to be looking "entertaining" and "professional". However, regarding the character, the headbutt attack was found to be too subtle to be noticed. About the environment, there appeared to be some confusion around the boxes -- While they contribute to the gameplay, they were also confused with item boxes. In addition, some boxes in the environment do not have collisions enabled, which was also confusing for the testers.

One other issue that came up with some testers was to lose track of their own character in the chaos.

The distinction between Player, Phantom and Revenant were found to be clear enough in general. However, due to the crowded game environment, it gets difficult to track the phantoms being activated into a revenant.

Similarly, the dominant environment color was occasionally causing confusion due to similarity with the characters.

UI

The in-game UI turned out to be a bit unclear for the players, it was especially difficult to follow the information presented on the UI overlay during the action. Players were having difficulty distinguishing and interpreting the information on the panels. The panels were scattered to the corners of the screen and this made them far apart from each other, making it burdensome to keep track of self and others. The health as a number was difficult to keep track of during the game, and several timers, such as the revenant activation timer and the chronogate cooldown timer, were missing completely. Moreover, the round timer and the countdown timer were not spotted. To summarize, most critical information was either unclear or missing from the User Interface.

Features

Some playtesters were enthusiastic enough to provide some new feature ideas that they would enjoy having in the game. Some of the ideas were to add a "Short Dash" action for the player, to implement "Combos" built out of the primary attacks and to include "Power-ups" in the game that would provide temporary advantages to players. In addition, some UI features such as showing damage values as eye candy were proposed.

Bugs

There were no critical bugs encountered during the playtesting sessions, apart from one occurrence of a non-deterministic, occasional bug that we were aware of and fixed in a certain release build, and some UI control issues that were likely present because of the default UI elements. Overall, the bugs did not interrupt the playtesting session.

Solutions

For the menus we decided to change the font for larger text blocks in the future. Additionally we want to add informative images instead of raw text.

We have thought of some improvements for the gameplay.
We might be able to change the knockback balancing so that melee attacks have a bigger impact but this might not solve the problem entirely. A solution would be to totally replace the Headbutt attack with another one with different animations. But due to the time limitations we don't think we can change this as it is a lower priority than some other problems.
Each player has his own playstyle so we dont force players to try to use Phantoms as a strategy. But making them easier to predict might make them more attractive to play around. Balancing Phantom spawn rates was one of our main targets in this testing phase and we figured that a lower amount of Phantoms and also less time between the player and the Phantoms help significantly.

In regards to the UI, one potential solution is to integrate the UI elements into the game world, for instance adding health bars on top of players and the activated revenants. We want to experiment with this approach first before fully committing to it, because there is a risk of this change making the interface more cluttered and difficult to understand. On the other hand, the information would not be scattered on the screen and it would be at relevant locations closer to the player's gaze. Regarding the timers, we are planning to make existing timers easier to notice and add the missing timers to the game.

For the overall appearance of the game, most of the changes necessary are small and would have lower impact on the game experience compared to some other more important points, therefore we are not prioritizing these changes at this point.