

Time Limited Events

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Summary

Time limited events are a great way to increase monetization and retention of a project and especially one in live-ops. Before starting to go into more details, I will “dissect” what’s already in-game and can be used towards a TLE system.

Assessment

My assessment is based on my playthrough of MW2 and knowledge of top(-grossing) games in the F2P market and their best practices in terms of TLEs (e.g. Marvel Strike Force, Star Wars Galaxy of Heroes, Mortal Kombat, Clash of Clans, Pokémon GO).

MW2 has existing mechanics that can be used to create parts of the TLE but based on my assessment these are not enough to engage people into playing TLEs.

Down below I detail a few of the critical areas where the game needs improvements to fully support a healthy TLE system (NOTE: I called “things” the total amount of collectable souls, heroes, cards, currencies, energy)

- Not enough “things” and type of “things” to collect in-game; it might be ok for the base game but for TLEs we need something more; this is seen quite

clearly when opening a chest – the offerings inside the chest are almost always similar/the same;

- No craving after THAT specific “thing”; the game needs something bigger/juicy/interesting “thing” to look out for, something that the players want and play towards; whilst campaign progression, chests threshold/s and leaderboard ranking are good and can be reused, we need something to create engagement (retention), the thresholds rewards of TLEs should blow user’s minds or at very least appear to be amazing...
- Low variety and offerings in the store itself; the in-game store needs to offer more “things”, more offers in general (price off), especially for high-cost heroes, link this with the TLE duration to create a time-constraint

All of that being said, I propose a design that can create an enticing and engrossing TLE system, while tackling all of the critical issues raised in my assessment and avoiding a long development cycle (no overburdened sprint/s size and scope).

Events

All of the events depicted below are modular (new features are marked in blue with NEW). This means any combination of modules (pick any from underneath the orange text) would work (with small exceptions, some being optional, marked with OPT) thus creating a big pool of events that can run periodically. UX-wise TLEs would need to be visible from the main menu, not nested, whilst push notification should be presented to users and pre-notify users of upcoming events. Below the modules you will find details on both PVE and PVP TLEs.

NOTE: These are just a handful of examples of modules that can be used, more can be added if needed.

TLE Modules

- Currency rewards
 - o N/A

- Gold
- Gems
- Hero Energy
- NEW - Random rewards (not marked on the UI) once in every 10-12-10th for example, TLE battle played (of any TLE)
- NEW - (name-in-progress for TLE currency) Mycelium/Shiro/Spores/Enzymes
- “Thing” rewards
 - New or additional calendar with small TLE rewards
 - Hero souls/shards
 - Hero upgrade cards
 - Hero card
 - Chests
 - NEW - Mycelium Chest - bought with big amount of gems
 - NEW - Unit skins (these can be expanded ad-infinitum via the multiple mushroom types existent on earth; also, skins have to look better than just a color swap)
 - NEW - Temporary Boosts
 - NEW - Permanent Boosts ala Passives (NOTE: this feature might be beyond the proposed scope)
- OPT - Requirements to join
 - N/A
 - Hero required
 - Profile Level required
 - League Ranking required
 - Campaign progress required
- OPT - Cost per battle / Ruleset
 - N/A
 - Energy
 - Gold
 - Elimination / Double Elimination
 - 3 Loses Elimination
- Duration

- 2 weeks
- 7 days
- 24 hours
- **OPT – Exclusive/special rewards:**
 - **NEW** - Exclusive skins
 - **NEW** - TLE Leaderboard rewards (at the end of the TLE, whomever has the most points - gained by playing the TLE, possibly over and over again - wins some amount of gems)
 - Exclusive heroes (this would be a big win but also a heavy task; exclusive content is one of the biggest reasons to participate in TLEs)
- **Store:**
 - Time limited heroes on sale while TLE is on
 - **NEW** - Rotating store (a couple of “things” with a timer – usually 24h - that you can purchase for a low gem cost and some with the special TLE currency)
- **Themes:**
 - Seasonal: Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn
 - Holidays: Christmas/New Year, Easter, Halloween etc. (NOTE: Identify where most of the player’s come from -region-wise- and find a specific holiday for that region and use it for the TLE holiday theme)
 - Follow the game theme (nature): Solstice, Earth Day, Global Recycling Day or really anything related to the nature theme etc.
 - Reward-centric: This can be anything from a Hero to a bunch of gems
 - TLE Cups: Similar to how past cups have taken places
- **Subtypes**
 - 1v1 Conquest
 - 1v1 Domination
 - 1v1 King of the hill
 - 2v2 classic
 - 2v2 coop
 - NOTE: All NEW subtypes can be adjusted for both 1v1 and 2v2
 - **NEW** - Sprint (small maps, capture half+1 buildings on the map to win a battle)

- **NEW** - No More Heroes (heroes are not available in-gameplay)
- **NEW** - Timeout (the player with the most buildings on the map after 3 minutes wins; If at equal amount of buildings, sudden death – first to capture a new building wins)
- **NEW** - Swarm (the player with the most units on the map after 3 minutes wins; If at equal number of units, sudden death - first to capture a new building wins - ignoring previous “most units win” rule)
- **NEW** - Heroic Duel (Heroes are down on the map and can be controlled - big ticket feature, will affect overall scope)
- **NEW** - Fungus Frenzy (game speed is doubled, all stats are doubled, building upgrades are not available in this game mode)
- **NEW** - 2vs2vs2 - Last player standing wins
- **NEW** - The Tower (1 lose elimination, each battle should cost something valuable, should be pretty a pretty hardcore, end-game like event)
- **NEW** - Us versus the world - This is a 2vAI with increasingly hard AIs as you progress in the TLE; This can also be a new boss (or old one) in a raid-like scenario (multiple plays needed to defeat, all players play towards a common goal)
- **NEW** - Twitch Cup (the team with the most amount of viewers - this can be either a vote in the chat or multiple running streams and people can choose which team stream to “support” - will have small boost in-game; NOTE: Unsure of the tech available to make it happen in a sensible amount of time)
- **NEW** - Mixed (an event can have various subtypes with each battle)
- **Allow replays**
 - Yes (can be supported by TLE leaderboard ranking)
 - Full Event replay (with lower rewards)
 - Single Battle replay (with lower rewards)
 - No
- **Progression/Reward threshold**
 - 10 battles:
 - 3rd battle reward
 - 6th battle reward

- 9th battle reward
 - 10th battle reward
- 5 battles:
 - 2nd battle reward
 - 5th battle reward
- 5 number of battles but with one end-reward, can be totally randomized game for each battle, elimination at 1 battle lost (not showing progression only the end goal; NOTE: these sorts of events should be short and have a craveable reward at the end)
- 15 number of battles with random rewards at certain thresholds (users like this sort of reward a lot, makes them more engaged with the TLE and more likely to finish a TLE event)
 - 3th battle reward
 - 5th battle hidden (not displayed on the UI) reward
 - 7th battle reward
 - 10th battle hidden (not displayed on the UI) reward
 - 15th battle reward

Examples of progression/monetization

- PVE TLE: Crafted for the PVE (Campaign) players in general as well as more content to players that reach the Campaign 1 paywall (level 6) with the end goal of converting to paying users and PVP modes; in this mode you will gain small amounts of Mycelium (TLE currency) for each battle won but not enough to engage into purchases or campaign play; Mycelium's main sink will be as an energy system in the campaign (e.g. costs 15 Mycelium to try and win a mission in the campaign, that's beyond the paywall, including maybe the second paid campaign too, but you gain 2 per battle won in a small PVE TLE event); Another sink for Mycelium is buying "things" in the rotating store:
 - Summary:
 - Get -> Mycellium
 - Spend -> Campaign Battles
 - Requirement for more Campaign Battles -> Play PVP or PVP TLEs

- PVP TLE: This is where the more difficult TLEs are presented, you will gain more Mycellium (even normal PVP battles should give 1 Mycellium per win), maybe enough to buy a card in the rotating store once per week; Mycellium can also be bought with gems (high cost of gems); In this way we create a thriving environment where the currency flow is controlled by the new TLE event currency whilst offering more content to players and new cards to buy with currency earned in this modes (but never enough to break progression) whilst stimulating both retention via a custom daily reward calendar and the TLEs themselves and monetization via this new currency which will be the NEW premium that everyone will want a piece of; This craving for the TLE currency (never enough to play one more mission in the campaign or buy that card/ soul you need to just get another upgrade/hero) will redirect people from PVE towards TLEs and then towards PVP; this is based on best practices in the industry, is more organic, feels fair to the user and in the end will be a smoother experience for our users and better revenue for the company.
 - o Summary:
 - Get -> Mycellium
 - Spend -> Campaign Battles, Rotating Store “Things”
 - Requirement for Mycellium -> Play more TLEs / buy more gems to get Mycellium

NOTE: these are not the final numbers; properly balancing/tweaking is vital to the success of this TLE system; numbers would be tweaked upon further testing, A/B testing, feedback etc.

Metrics

The following metrics are the most critical ones that need to be checked:

- Retention: This is a no-brainer since the nature of TLEs is to increase day-to-day retention (D1 to D7 for starters); without retention no other metric will move towards our perceived targets;
 - o Target for TLE: D1: 15-25%

- ARPDau: Monetizing the TLEs would be crucially not just for TLE's sake but for the health of any live-ops project;
 - o Target for TLE: 0.03-0.05
- Progression Checks: Analytics should track (if not already done) progression throughout the game (such as first-time user experience) and of course throughout the TLE (for example see the onboarding TLE process or where people get stuck or better why they get stuck);
 - o Target for TLE: hard to measure for a target, but good to oversee it regularly for any hiccups in the TLE system

BONUS Misc considerations

These are some issues observed during my playthrough of the game, most of them are unrelated to the main task; these might be known issues, but just in case it's things that weren't observed before, I listed them down below:

- You can't track your progress to additional campaign missions (after first paywall)
- -60 min in chest doesn't show the ad button, mislead and might frustrate some users (most users don't read anyway...)
- Energy consumption is unknown (per battle)
- Boss and boss ceremonies should be more special than a normal battle
- Trophy list empty (would be good to see at least what you can unlock)
- Text inconsistencies (e.g. awards/trophies and several mentions in library - which is a strange name for a glossary)
- Some of the flow for ad monetization is broken (e.g. "There is no ad available, please try again later." Error with 100% repro if you watch the ad for more gold before the one for another card when opening a chest)
- Map names should be more interesting
- Tutorial messages overlap with victory screen
- "Sign-up" button at FTUE is very "scary", sounds like a proper commitment which does shone some users away