

New strategies of game design: Using time as a direct factor.

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Introduction

Most strategies for contemporary game design encourage people to spend more time, effort and money. This dominant goal faces an inevitable dilemma: the more one is encouraged into the game, for example time, the less he/she will become interested. Such a dilemma can be considered from three aspects:

- **time** : The more time one spends in the game, the more familiar with the game he/she becomes, resulting in increasingly feeling of bored.
- **effort**: the more effort one puts, the more tired or bored one may feel. Once the pleasure one gains becomes less than the tired feeling one experiences playing, he/she will stop playing the game.
- **money**: The more money one invests in the game, the more likely he/she becomes overpowered in the game. Such power lets people lose their goal in the game and also destroys the balance of the game. (Money is probably the most direct factor to value a game. It results in many illusions for developers to make a relatively bad game in order to gain more profits.)

The new strategy I develop and conclude from popular games dealing with this dilemma. It is both cheap and effective: since there is no requirement for new technologies applied, only needs more subtle design for structure or arrangement of a game. It should make the game more sustainable.

The new strategy, **Time Strategy (TS)**, deals with using time as a direct factor to design the structure of one game.

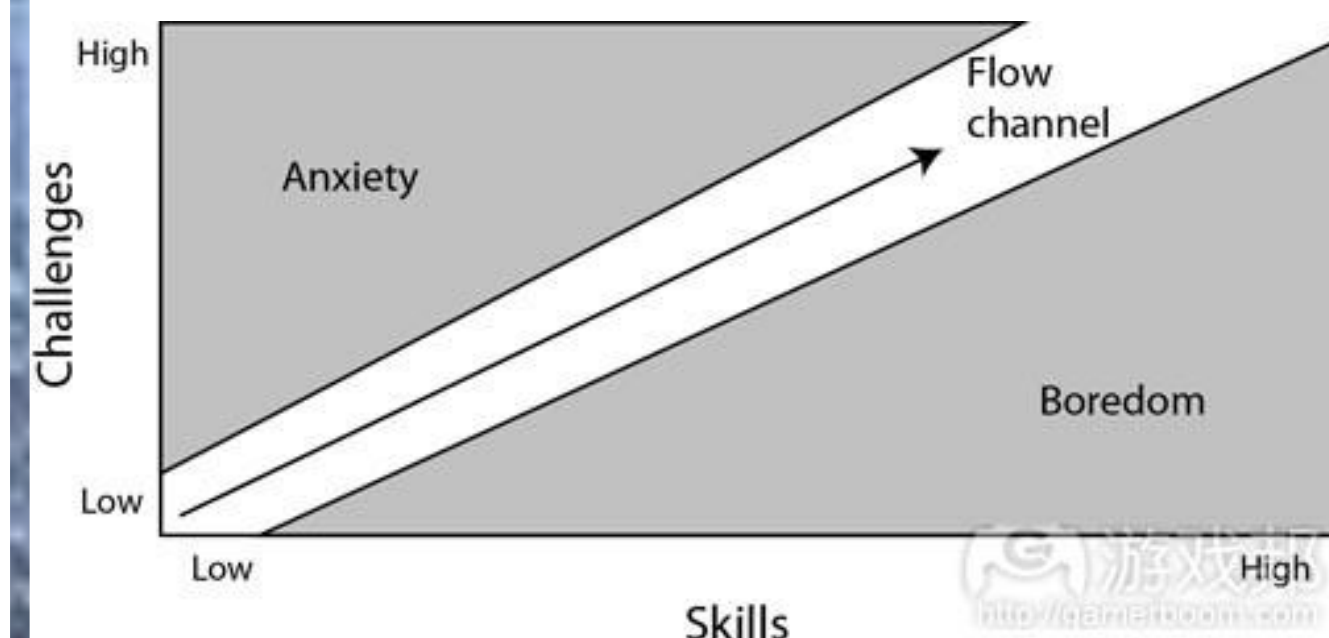
characteristics of new strategy

TS means the design should assign time more direct value in order to make the game more sustainable. For common examples, online games often give players bonuses according to their long online time in the game. TS can be concluded into three aspects:

- **transfer time into direct game currency**: (exchange happens directly between online time and game currency) for example: 100 hours online time for one bonus, mission or equipment. Encourage people to stay loyal by directly giving value of time spending.
- **making specific time more valuable than other time**: To encourage people to stay online by specific time, it tries to cultivate people's habit of logging in the game more frequently. For example, special simple missions may appear 12:00am everyday. Customers will gain bonuses by almost no effort input.
- **waiting time value**: encourage people to merely log into the game after certain intervals (for examples, every one hour players get a chance of lottery). This requires only a click time, thus let players also value their waiting time, making players log into the game more frequently.

overview of other game design strategies

It is hard to consider the game design strategies without considering the game type. When people talk about game type, it already includes certain strategies of design. For examples, RTS (real-time strategies), RPG (role-playing game), and FPS (first-person shoot) are already understood as certain playing styles when people see the name. Thus design strategy, design techniques, and design theory are overlapped by common sense. Most game design books talk about how to design in different aspects rather than have some systematic theories of design. Most theories of design usually concluded strategies from psychology aspects. For example, the figure is the most famous "**flow channel theory**". It suggests **the best choice of design a game is letting people to stay in the flow channel. Otherwise, people will easily give up the game.**



In fact, most games are successful first, then develop the strategies of design. "Usually games are made by inspiration and intuition. And this is not a bad approach because, at the end of the day, game creation is a deeply creative activity" — by Toni Sala <Game Design Theory Applied: The Flow Channel>

Why PC games are different from mobile phone games?

Distinctions of PC game and mobile phone game are due to the different technology level according to the history.

Games in computers have capacity of designing much more complex than mobile phone games.

Make comparisons, before 2000, computer games can be designed more complex just like Red Alert and StarCraft. While mobile phone games are all like Gluttonous Snake, which is simple, colorful, low memory and low CPU requirement.

After 2012, when smartphones emerged with 4G networks available, phone games start to have the capacity of more complex design.

Moreover, phone games should design less intense according to fractional time of users. Users are usually at their fractional time when playing the phone games. This requires a design of short, and less intense play format, while richness in long-term goals. Thus phone games tend to design small, short games with more collective pleasure. While PC games are designed to be more focused.

This is probably the reason why time strategy originates from mobile phone games. Clash of Clans is one of the typical and earliest examples of such strategy.

advantages or goals of this strategies

Such technique of design strategy should have three objectives which especially benefit to maintain the sustainability of games.

First, To restrict people from long time and intense effort playing, instead encouraging people with short time playing and more frequently login in long period. For example, not encouraging playing 10 hours a day, but one hour several times a day.

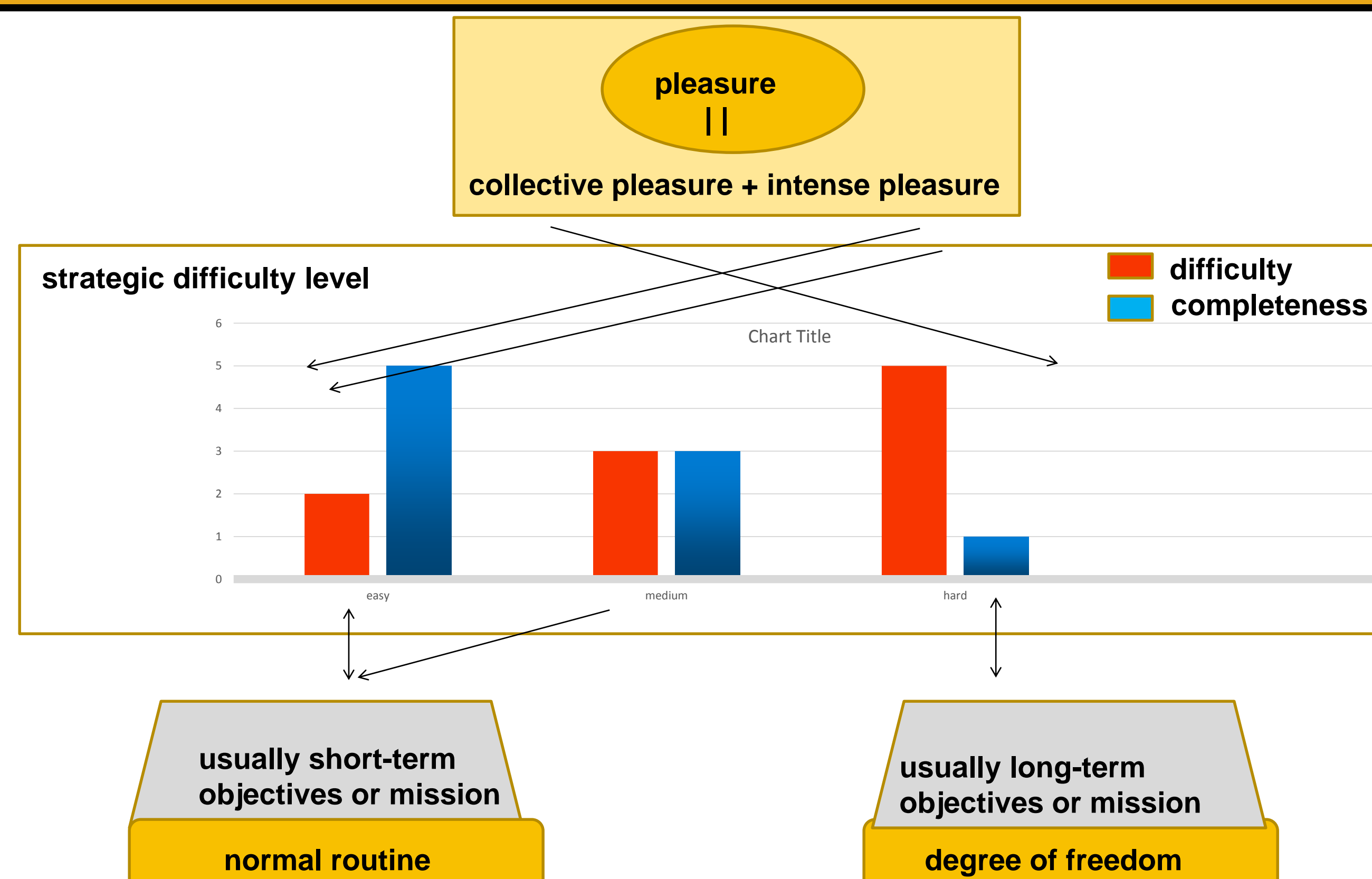
This is achieved easily by making specific time more valuable than others. Thus people tend to login during that specific time with simple actions to perform rather than large intense effort which makes people tired and boring.

Second, design a system which discourages people to invest large amounts of money at once instead encouraging small amounts of money and increasing frequency of spending. For example, 25\$ a month has the same value of 300\$ as long as he/she logs in the game everyday. This is carefully achieved by making richness of long-term goals.

This is especially effective way of keeping balance of game.

Third, keep people's attention in long-term goals to gain collective pleasure. This involves carefully design of degree of freedom. Example of Clash of Clans is best for this advantage. Most people spend short and frequent periods playing the game. While in the top ranking of the world, one can play more than 8 hours a day in order to achieve more resources.

important terms in one systematic design picture



Game of Metal Walz time restriction strategies (a game of collection tanks similar to Kantai collection)

- **Double time restriction**: oil is needed in order to do mission; it regenerates 40/h; Repair Liquid is needed to repair tanks. Repair Liquid is needed when a tank is at low maintainance (100-0) after several actions performed. regenerates 40/h)
- **richness of long-term goals which promote long-term pleasure; collection type design. Kantai idea of model.**
- **Two game currency system**: silver is normal game currency, and Gold is when people invest money. Just like other games, the currency system can be much flexible.

