MARKLE FORUM on CHILDREN and MEDIA

SIMCITY
Maxis

Case Presenter:
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  Maxis General Manager

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Why SimCity?

- SimCity is a game
- SimCity has been used in classrooms as an educational tool
- SimCity has a uniquely broad audience since its original version
- How has its educational appeal aided in the success of SimCity?
- How have the above factors affected both iterations of SimCity as well as other Maxis games?
SimCity Case Presentation

• The SimCity Franchise
  – Creative and development approach
  – The role of research

• The PC Entertainment Market

• The SimCity Audience

• Market & Response
The SimCity Franchise

- SimCity is a thirteen year phenomenon
  - SimCity Original, 1989
  - SimCity 2000, 1993
  - SimCity 3000 & Unlimited, 1999 & 2000

- Lifetime sales of over 9M units

- Grown from $20M to $122M per title franchise since its first release
  
  - Note: this excludes license and compilation units/revenue
The Evolution of SimCity
Origins of the Idea

- Will Wright was inspired about building cities, organically, when making another game, Raid on Bungling Bay.
- A lifetime interest in emergent complex behavior from simple systems.
- Topical Research – specific inspiration came from Jay Forrester’s work in modeling cities on computers for social science study purposes.
SimCity Description

- SimCity gives you the power to build the ultimate urban empire; your city, your way.
  - The first of a new type of entertainment software now known as “God” games.
  - A system simulation that provides the player with a set of rules and tools to create and control an urban environment.
  - A software toy, a sandbox.
Development – Creative Goals

• Innovate – Create engaging systems for familiar or not so familiar topics; cities, people, ants

• SIM brand values
  – Open Ended/Blank Canvas
  – Creative/Thinking
  – Challenging/Building

• Ease of Entry

• Open Model – customization
  – www.simcity.com
SimCity inspired titles

- SimEarth – 1990
- SimAnt – 1991
- A Train – 1992
- SimHealth – 1993 (with Markle Foundation)
- SimFarm – 1994
- SimTown – 1994
- Widget Workshop – 1994
- SimTower – 1995
- SimIsle – 1995
- SimPark – 1996
- SimTunes – 1996
- SimCopter – 1996
- SimGolf – 1996
- Street of SimCity – 1997
- SimSafari - 1998
The various phases of development have different research goals

- Concept Phase
  - Test concept appeal
  - Design research
    - Graduate study program collaborations

- Development Phase
  - Playability/Usability
  - Market Analysis
  - Positioning

- Post Release Phase
  - Customer Profile Analysis
  - Game Data Mining
Research Techniques

• Design
  – Books, personal contacts, internet
  – Local and National data resources for tuning
  – Game Data Mining

• Usability/Positioning/Concept
  – Kleenex Testing
  – Focus Groups
  – Market Analysis

• Informal community involvement

• Participation in conferences, open dialog with Universities
References

• City Development
  – Barclay Mapworks, Street Guide to Santa Clara County
  – A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings and Construction, Christopher Alexander
  – City Life, Witold Wichenski

• Graphic Inspiration
  – Over the city, aerial photography books
  – A Field Guide to American Houses, Virginia and Lee McAlester
  – A History of Building Types, Nikolaus Pevsner

• General Data and influence
  – GIS: Geographic Information Systems
  – EBMUD
  – PG&E
  – Internet city sites
PC Entertainment Market

- North America
  - PC Data 2001
    - $1.6B total revenue
    - 73,109,487 total units
    - Highly competitive – increasing gap between top ten titles and all others in terms of units and revenue

- Europe
  - UK and Germany dominate the market
    - Localization of text, audio and sometime graphics
    - Simultaneous ship dates
    - About 1/3 of lifetime total for SimCity

- Asia/Japan
  - Growing PC markets
    - Online gaming rooms
    - Wireless adoption rate – texting
    - Localization, Social and Piracy Issues
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Ship Date</th>
<th>Yr-01 $</th>
<th>Yr-01 Units</th>
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<td>Electronic Arts</td>
<td>2/1/2000</td>
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<td>Diablo 2 Expansion Set: Lord of Destruction</td>
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<td>The Sims: Hot Date Expansion Pack</td>
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<td>Microsoft</td>
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<td>Return To Castle Wolfenstein</td>
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<td>MS Flight Simulator 2002 Pro</td>
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<td>MS Train Simulator 1.0</td>
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Business Goals

• Top five PC entertainment product
  – 1.5M units WW first year of release
  – $60M net revenue first year
• Expand the franchise in meaningful, high quality manner
• Grow first year franchise results by minimally 50%
• Sustain the franchise through internet, gameplay additions and community
Development Considerations

• PC Entertainment Market Considerations
  – PC entertainment market highly competitive
  – Production values increasing as well as marketing dollars

• Technology Advancements
  – From DOS/286 with bi-annual advances
  – Now, Windows/1.5GHz Pentium, wide ranging graphics capability with 6 month advances but 2-3 year home PC turnover

• Product Quality and Cost
  – SimCity Original (1989) - $600K - $1M approx
  – SimCity 2000 (1993) - $3.5M
  – SimCity 3000 (1999) - $7M approx
  – Current generation PC Games – approx $8M - 12M
SimCity Target Audience

• Market Target
  – Primary:
    • Previous SimCity players
    • Males ages 18 to 35 – Early adopters
  – Secondary: Computer owners 9 to 40

• SimCity Current Demographics
  – Based on electronic registration
    • 75% Male
      – Predominantly 14 to 25
    • 25% Female
    • Unique in PC entertainment
SimCity’s Educational Audience

- **SimCity in the Classroom**
  - Teacher’s Guides for SimCity
  - Site Licenses for schools with Scholastic
  - Series of Sim kids’ products

- **Special Events**
  - Future Cities Competition with National Engineers Week
    - [www.futurecity.org](http://www.futurecity.org)

- **GIS Conferences**

- **Collaboration with North Western University on several fronts**
SimCity’s Success

• A game about city planning?
  – Initial positioning as a software toy
  – Open model garnered hard core appeal

• Attributes of success
  – Launched on Mac
    • Press and word of mouth played a key role
    • Open model garnered hard core appeal
  – Developed educational distribution and value added skus
  – Innovative and Unique
  – Socially Redeeming – the feel good game

• Great Execution = Brand Value
Market Strategy

• **Current Strategy**
  – Leverage brand and studio recognition
  – Primary target: SimCity fans, hard core gamers (early adopters)
  – 1st week sales momentum is critical
  – Print, Internet, Press and TV
  – Embrace community – build awareness, participation and excitement
  – Sustained marketing and promotional efforts
  – Word of mouth continues to be a key factor
Audience Response

- Over 9 million units of SimCity
- 75% of Sims players owned a version of SimCity
- Inspiration for 1000’s of fan websites
  - www.sc3000.com
- Inspiration for category of derivative games known as God games or Real Time Strategy
  - Sid Meier’s Civilization
  - Tycoon games
  - Age of Empires
  - Cesar
Marketplace History

- SimCity Original – 1989 – 1.2M units
  - #1 selling PC game
- SimCity 2000 – 1993 – 3.4M units (console incl.),
  - Top selling PC game of 1994
- SimCity 3000 – 1999 – 4.6M units
  - Top grossing PC game of 1999
- Maxis had 5 titles in top 20 PC Data N.A. in 2001
- Maxis has had the #1 PC game three years running, PC Data
What’s next...

- Technical Advancements
  - Graphic Performance – 3D cards, video memory
  - Higher performance CPUs
- Not more complex
- More engaging and better feedback
- Internet a key feature
- And now for the suspense....