

doublesix Top Gun User Research

PlayableGames recently conducted user testing on doublesix's title Top Gun.

doublesix wanted us to gather user feedback to explore the following:

- How the game was received in its current build state
- Control mechanisms
- Game learnability
- Tutorials
- Game engagement and enjoyment

We performed two evenings of user testing with four players, to help discover the answers to these questions. Each evening session lasted for 90 minutes.

The research took place in our studios in London.

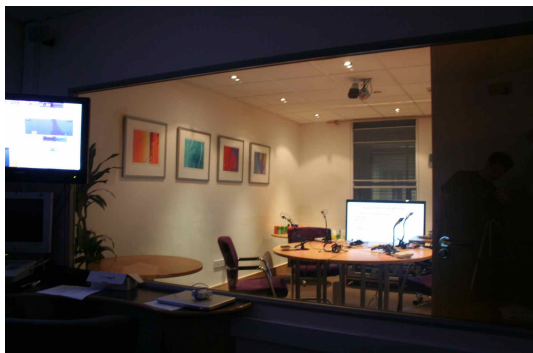


Figure 1. Testing in our studios

We recruited the participants to match the target audience for the game. Two players were to have played previous flight games on a console, the other two should have no experience with playing flight games.

Each participant had their own PS3 and played the game individually. The output of the PS3 was split so the researchers could view what the player was seeing on a display in the observation room.

On the first evening, we explained to the players that they should play the game through as they normally would if they had just purchased the game. This allowed us to understand the players reactions to the initial stages of the gameplay, and importantly how they progressed through the tutorials. We observed their natural behaviour on the screens and through one-way glass.

Midway through the first evening, we spoke to each player in turn, after they had played for an hour, to understand their first impressions of the game, and to gauge their opinions of the crucial first few game elements.

On the second evening, we asked players to try out particular areas of the game that they hadn't already reached allowing us to assess their understanding of the more advanced features of the game.

As our client observed the sessions, we were able to discuss any issues with them there and then, along with ways to improve the user experience.

This was a relatively small sample of end users, and testing took place over a short amount of time. However, it produced a large amount of valuable user data that we could feed back to the client. These were delivered in a list of issues and recommendations to improve the user experience, marking each as high, medium, or low priority, depending on its effect on the player's game experience.

The type of issues that were discovered from our testing were in line with DoubleSix's expectations but also revealed some new results:

- That the game was well received and enjoyable to play.
- The tutorials were too long, with the players often wanting to learn the basics then jump right into the game.
- The more advanced control mechanisms were not used a lot and not easily recalled.
- Players found using the guns in dogfights difficult, often resorting to using only missiles.
- The game presented a good challenge curve as players progressed through the game.

These are just some of the high-level findings. We reported full findings back to the client, and the client has decided to use them to implement changes to improve the players experience.

We are happy to say that even though the game was near release, the findings from what is just a small piece of user research have enabled doublesix to make design decisions that they are convinced will make for a better game.

Our projects are always tailored to each client's requirements, and if you would like to discuss anything with us that you feel we may be able to help with, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

About PlayableGames

PlayableGames, a division of ExperienceLab, has been studying (and playing) games for years. PlayableGames consists of a team of highly experienced gamers and user experience researchers, a team that shapes gaming experiences for console manufacturers and publishers in the UK and abroad.

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