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Role of Business and Product Strategies in Mobile Gaming Companies

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Abstract

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Strategy is a topic which has been covered through various academic literatures. Mobile gaming business as a field of business, has not been researched through the lenses of strategy. The aim of this thesis is to understand what kind of role business and product strategies play role in three interviewed Finnish mobile gaming companies. The research questions of this thesis are the following: How sophisticated are mobile gaming companies' business and product strategies, how are these strategies understood by managers and team members within these companies, and finally how these strategies influence decision-making?

This thesis does not have a commissioner. Thus the thesis aims to bring new thoughts and ways of forming, communicating and embedding strategic work into mobile gaming organizations as a form of managerial implication.

This study has a qualitative approach and the research strategy of this study is a case study. Companies were selected based on their age, size, platform orientation to mobile and product portfolio. Interviews were conducted between June and October 2023. Interviewed persons were selected based on the impact of their role in mobile gaming development product framework. Content analysis was utilized to analyze all the answers and draw answers to the research questions.

The goals of this thesis were answered by identifying unifying themes per research questions shared among the companies based on the qualitative face to face interviews. The themes explain the depth of business & product strategy, how companies communicate their strategic objectives and how the selected strategies directly affect the work. Results suggest that companies have quite in-depth product and business strategies which directly influence individual company's decisions, outlook and how the companies' position themselves in the competitive mobile gaming market. Not only that, procedures are in place to measure the effectiveness of selected strategies They are communicated effectively within the organization and outside few outliners, team managers and employees understand what the selected strategies mean to their work. The topics for further development of this topic are 1) Identifying what components companies' strategies are lacking 2) Evaluating companies' strategies.

Preface

Every minute used to write this thesis is dedicated for the loving memory of Leena Piirainen (1952-2018) who was not only a mother, sister and teacher but also my personal guide and inspiration in achieving academic goals.

"Those whom true love has held, it will go on holding."
- Seneca the Younger

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veikko Piirainen', written in a cursive style.

Veikko Piirainen

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List of Symbols

GaaS – Game as a Service

IAPs – In-app purchases. User pays various dollars or other currencies for items, services, and in-game currencies.

Ads – Advertisements. The developer runs advertisements in the game to collect passive revenue from players.

CPI – Cost per Install. How much developer pays for acquired user.

ROAS – Return of ad spend. Marketing metric that measures revenue earned for each dollar you spend on advertising.

LTV – Lifetime Value is an estimate of the average revenue that a customer will generate throughout their lifespan as a customer.

DAU – Daily active users. How many customers play the game in 24-hour window each day.

1 Introduction

"Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity" is a famous quotation from the Roman stoic philosopher Seneca. It perfectly captures the essence of the dynamic and ever-evolving mobile gaming industry, which has witnessed tremendous growth and countless success stories, including companies like Rovio, Supercell, and Small Giant Games. Understanding this industry's current state, past achievements, and prospects starts with understanding its scale, the ever-changing competitive landscape, and the risks built in this industry.

While the success stories in the gaming industry, especially those of Finnish gaming companies, are often heard about, the failures are rarely heard about. The mobile gaming market is fiercely competitive, with almost 700,000 mobile games available for users to choose from as of 2023. In 2022 alone, the total revenue of the mobile gaming market reached a staggering USD 92 billion, highlighting the intense competition within this industry (Knezovic, 2023). What sets the mobile gaming market apart from other industries is the absence of complete dominance by giant developers like Electronic Arts, King, Tencent, or Supercell. Smaller companies, such as Kitka Games from Kajaani, have demonstrated that they can compete and achieve breakthrough success with limited resources (Loukasmäki, 2022). The giants do exist, but there is always room for new companies to seize the market share with innovative products that appeal to the audience. Hence, from the writer's point of view, the industry giants never achieve total dominance but are in a constant uphill battle to retain their users. Now, this same market is losing its size, so competition is becoming more challenging as in 2023 (James, 2023).

The writer of this thesis has worked in the mobile gaming industry for about a decade now on three different continents: Europe, Asia, and North America. Throughout this journey, the writer has noticed four key things that make the mobile gaming market unique and stand out compared to other industries:

- The playing field in this industry is remarkably even. Business models and distribution channels provide equal and instant access to developers worldwide, allowing them to compete with similar products for the same audience, regardless of their geographical location.
- Unexpected successes can revolutionize the industry. Kitka Games and their game, Stumble Guys, are recent examples of unexpected achievements that caught everyone off

guard. Highlighting that size does not always grant instant success in this industry, but it can achieve breakthroughs from everywhere and even from a smaller team. Sheer amount of competition plays a vital role to keep market moving (Toledo, 2023).

- With distribution and monetization being similar for all developers, the competitive edge lies in technical capabilities or the company's strategic approaches to gain an extra advantage over competitors in targeting an ever-changing audience landscape. In essence, knowing yourself and knowing your competitors might give you the advantage you need (Johnson, 2015)!

Making games is chaotic, nevertheless, where one works. There are multiple factors ranging from culture to communication all the way to technical issues which make development a nightmare (Parashar, 2017). You might have a billion dollar idea but first the game has to survive the valley of death. This has raised the question in the writer's head on multiple occasions: Why?

As real companies are used as an example, it is crucial that others can also learn, not only from their mistakes but from their successes in effective strategic work. Strategy is also quite a finicky concept, so this thesis aims to lay the foundation for clear definitions of how existing academic sources and research can be implemented in this young, dynamic, but also unfortunately chaotic industry to bring a sense of order. Primarily those under the control of business and product strategy, which from writer's perspective and experience, work as a cornerstone around everything else is built upon. The game product is THE critical source of revenue for the company and stands as the test bed of the company founder's business hypothesis of what the consumers want.

By examining the current status and importance of strategies in the decision-making process, this research provides valuable insights into how companies can effectively develop and maintain their competitive edge in an industry abundant with opportunities and challenges. Given the industry's current declining momentum, the timing for this research could not be any better, as even industry giants must reassess their strategies and adapt to changing market dynamics (James, 2023).

The research problem captures the current state of mobile gaming. The market is getting more competitive as market revenue drops (James, 2023), and even existing industry juggernauts face problems with their games. Especially Playtika summarizes many problems in the industry, such as closing studios (Atzmon-Sumager, 2023) and halting new game development completely

(Thomas-Akoo, 2023). This research aims to create a bridge between existing academic strategy research and the fast-moving mobile gaming market. As competitiveness increases, existing companies must improve their strategic work and realize the full benefits of efficient strategic work, especially in the field of business and product strategy. The purpose is not to reinvent the wheel but to increase the depth of existing knowledge of strategic work in mobile gaming.

The expected outcome of this research is to shed light on the existence of business and product strategies in shaping product decisions within the small case sample while also contributing to the existing academic knowledge on strategy implementation in the dynamic and competitive gaming market by exploring the sophistication and understanding of these strategies. The findings will offer insights to industry practitioners on optimizing strategy implementation and decision-making processes, ultimately enhancing their competitiveness. As this thesis does not have a commissioner, it will be written as stated in the thesis objectives as an analysis of how a few selected gaming companies materialize strategic work in their operations. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the academic understanding of business and product strategy complexity in the context of the mobile gaming industry. Furthermore, it will serve as a foundation for future research, enabling further exploration of strategies and their impact on decision-making in the dynamic and fast-paced mobile gaming market. Further research is needed, for example, researching how companies properly implement, update, and communicate strategic objectives internally.

The following three research questions will guide the study:

1. How sophisticated are mobile gaming companies' business and product strategies?
2. How are these strategies understood by managers and team members within these companies?
3. How these strategies influence decision-making throughout the product development framework?

It needs to be emphasized that the intention is not to judge or evaluate the strategies of the interviewed companies.

This research will adopt a qualitative research approach to deepen and reveal the understanding of the subject, utilizing an in-depth deductive qualitative interview study as a research method. The interviews will target managers, developers, designers, and marketing representatives to gain

comprehensive insights into business and product strategies' presence, comprehension, and impact on decision-making processes. Existing academic literature on business and product strategies will be a foundation for formulating interview questions and guiding data analysis. A qualitative research approach is opted for instead of quantitative interviews, as the objective is to comprehensively grasp the company's dependencies, their cognitive processes, and the rationales underlying the chosen pathways. Existing literature on game development stages guides us (Bramble, 2023) on the inner workings of gaming companies' steps and responsibilities to create a game and which roles contribute the most to its success. Furthermore, the writer of this thesis will have created a clear segmentation for companies that would be selected for the interview process.

As highlighted earlier, interview is chosen as this thesis research method. A qualitative interview enables the writer of this thesis to ask open-ended questions and encourage the participants to tell their personal stories, experiences, and viewpoints on how strategy affects and manifests in their respective companies. This enables the writer to collect data and viewpoints that would be impossible to find through quantitative research methods. A qualitative interview study provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic, contributing to the existing body of knowledge, and thus pairs well with the chosen case study research strategy. Two types of questionnaires are prepared for the interviews: One aimed at topic management and a second for the employees in key departments.

Thematic content analysis is chosen as a data analysis method to find the underlying themes and topics to answer research questions leading this multi-case study.

2 Business and product strategies – Building blocks of success

A proper theoretical framework plays a significant role in this research as it is used to form the interview questions for the employees and managers to find answers to the research questions used in qualitative interviews. As explained in the previous chapter, thematic analysis is used where existing literature is used to deconstruct the answers in a deductive way. Thus, understanding everything related to business and product strategies to present case study properly. To summarize, the academic framework aims to achieve three set goals so we can answer research questions:

1. It allows us to keep the focus on the research questions and identify factors surrounding the research topic creating a stronger bond between the two (Yin, 2018, p.65).
2. It allows the form of the proper questions for the qualitative interview stage (Yin, 2018, p.63).
3. It allows us to analyze and identify patterns in the answers correctly (Yin, 2018, p.60).

Understanding how this paper researches two key strategies, business, and product, manifest in gaming company decision-making is a fruitful topic that can easily be extended to other questions, such as how to make strategic decisions better or why certain strategic implementations are behind. Those are not part of the research framework, and thus, the focus must be clear. Academic references help to keep the focus on the existence of strategies, how they are understood, and how they affect decision-making. The first achievable point with the academic framework is to showcase the potential and extend how gaming companies can be viewed through strategy topics. This showcases the absolute need and potential for further studies in this field. Let this specific research be the springboard for future research. Ensuring that research questions are the desired objective. Thus, research will also dwell on communication and how strategies are implemented as a part of the company's operations.

The second point of the academic framework is related to the material collection part of this thesis. Given the writer's intention to conduct face-to-face interviews with companies using the qualitative interview method, it is imperative to construct the interview questions based on the existing knowledge. The fact that the focus is limited, per first point, makes this achievable and is a requirement for deductive qualitative research. Selected frame can build strong bridges throughout the research process.

Through tight theoretical framework focus (first point), research can form the right questions to support the case study research strategy and method (second point) to discover patterns in companies' behavior, which help us to answer the research questions. It is expected that as time passes and the writer of this thesis will continue preparing for the interviews, the total amount of academic references will increase in the given parameter.

Qualitative research has one characteristic that aims to support case study development: find causes and patterns that stand out and understand them. Thus, the third and last benefit of the chosen academic framework is that it helps us to do just that. Collected answers can be understood and dissected correctly. The circle is complete; the focus is kept clear through a chosen academic framework, fully understanding its limitations. Questions are formed using it, and it can analyze the answers set research questions.

2.1 Business, product, communication, and implementation

Strategy is a vastly researched topic. If one searches for strategy in Google Scholar, one quickly finds over 7 160 000 articles. What articles should be looked into to fulfill academic framework goals and research questions? The writer of this thesis suggests four categories to answer research questions. As stated before, the limited scope of the research and the full potential of this topic showcase the absolute need and potential for future research in this industry.

- Business strategy research – To go alongside first research question
- Product strategy - To go alongside first research question
- How to communicate the strategy - To go alongside second research question
- How to implement the strategy - To go alongside third research question

Combining product and business strategies helps us form a solid and "ideal" understanding of how mobile gaming companies operate in the marketplace. It is oversaturated and highly competitive, with fast-moving customer expectations but with high opportunities. These strategic models and breakdowns work as a great backbone to explain certain phenomena and form the most adequate questions for the companies. They also help us to create apparent differences between the two:

- Business strategy – How companies gain competitive advantage through their actions
- Product strategies – How companies achieve business goals with a product or feature

There is existing evidence that the balance between these two can cause different innovation results depending on the company's strategic orientation (Blumentritt & Danis, 2006, p. 285). Also, a correlation exists between acquiring competencies and fixing incompetencies through proper co-existence and alignment of business goals and technology (Chester, 1994). It is healthy to remember that there is evidence highlighting that specific strategies fail simply because they are not strategies (Vermeulen, 2017). They fail to set clear direction, priorities, and hoped outcomes, or they are communicated (Vermeulen, 2017).

The business and product strategy's objective is NOT to determine if the strategies are viable. The objective of the strategies part is to:

1. Find the "ingredients" of the strategies to analyze their complexity.
2. Help to form proper questions to find answers to the research questions.
3. Ask those questions from the right persons, knowing where their product lies in development.

Further product strategy-related content, such as stages of game development and key roles (Bramble, 2023), helps us pinpoint who to ask and break down the product journey into four stages.

The complexity of the above strategies gives us great tools to form questions to identify the complexity of the company's strategies, which is the first research question. The other two research questions help us form questions, but there is a need to complement them with a few additional sources. The research questions in question are:

- How well are these strategies understood by managers and team members within these companies?
- To what extent do these strategies influence decision-making throughout the product development framework?

Given the interrelatedness of these topics with the communication and implementation of these strategies, these subjects will also be thoroughly covered. The same reason underscores the emphasis on business and product strategy. The formation of the questions and comprehension of the phenomenon will be attained through a combined exploration of these aspects.

Business strategy – Strategy without process is little more than a wish list

Business strategy research is the first half of the core components of the theoretical framework. The writer of this thesis wants to use these to identify and analyze existing business strategies complexities which exist in mobile gaming companies. Even though, as stated in the beginning introduction, mobile gaming companies share similar distribution channels and monetization mechanics, they pool vast amounts of internal strengths in the form of team and team capabilities to their business strategy. Similarly, the business strategy articles help to form proper questions during the qualitative interview stage. These strategies can also manifest in various, differentiating ways in interviewed companies. Some might put high emphasis on differentiation, quality customer/market segment or understanding the market as a key organizational objective or goal (Rumelt, 1998).

To isolate and understand the manifestation of business strategy, a description of it is required. Researcher Teece. M, (Teece, 2010) goes into great length in describing the link between business models, business strategy and innovation. When companies form they employ a business model that describes value creation, delivery and capture mechanisms to reflect the managements hypothesis of what customers and the market want (Teece, 2010). The mobile game itself is the manifestation of this hypothesis of the management team. It withholds all the expectations the management has on the users, their behavior, market demands and how they can be different to thousands of other game companies that compete in the same market. The aim is not to discuss the business model but the strategy. Strategy is how companies implement the business model! Henry Mintzbergs 5Ps (Housing Diversity Network, N.d.) help us to identify the five approaches to strategy:

Plan – Comes naturally from management. Default automatic approach.

Ploy – Companies plot to disrupt, discourage, or otherwise influence competitors.

Pattern – Organizational behavior that shapes to become a strategy.

Position – How companies position themselves in the market landscape.

Perspective – Companies' behavior patterns that shape perspective and things the organization will focus on.

Strategy as an execution plan (Rumelt, 1998): Strategy is how companies implement this model throughout their organization to bring it to life by setting objectives, policies, and goals. "A strategy is a set of objectives, policies, and plans that, together, define the scope of the enterprise and its approach to survival and success" (Rumelt, 1998, p. 2). The above observations about the nature of strategy and its essence raise a first question, also identified by researchers Berman S. and Hagan J. (2006, p.35): How do companies define their strategy and the key factors that define it? This is the vital starting point in the start of researching and interviewing companies, as this foundation spurs other vital parts discussed here. If the strategy is an execution plan, it must be well defined through its objectives and vital competitive factors.

As mobile gaming is a technology-heavy industry, being business strategy-driven can offer companies multiple benefits: Being able to change the basis of competition, breaking the rules of scale, and introducing completely new business models (Berman & Hagan, 2006, p.28-29). As will be demonstrated in the upcoming chapter regarding product strategy, these adaptations do not happen in a vacuum but through the product. Berman S. and Hagan J. echo this as a company's capability to combine business strategy with technology, and market insights is the key to creating competitive advantage (Berman, S. J., & Hagan, J., 2006, p. 35). Not only is it important that business strategies are identified, but also the awareness of the factors that play a role in their formulation, particularly in terms of how these objectives are conveyed to the teams and individual team members. Business strategy evaluation plays a minor role in this research to make identifying its complexity and formulation easier. Researcher Rumelt (1998, p. 1) laid down three important questions:

Are the objectives of the business appropriate? Are the significant policies and plans appropriate?

Do the results obtained to date confirm or refute critical assumptions on which the strategy rests?

Evaluation might sound counterproductive when the goals of this thesis have been set to identify the complexities of the strategies, but Rumelt (1998) gives quite definite observation to its importance, stating, "strategy can neither be formulated nor adjusted to changing circumstances without a process of strategy evaluation" (P.1).

Rumelt (1998) states immediately that "strategy is centrally concerned with the selection of goals and objectives" (P.1). If the goal is to comprehend the intricacies of business strategies within

game companies, the pivotal aspects encompass how these strategies are devised, quantified, and assessed. Thus, two aspects need to be identified: the goals and the method by which they are assessed. The evaluation of their performance at regular intervals is crucial for the survival and success of companies (Rumelt, 1998, p. 2).

Rumelt (1988) states that companies' strategies are usually formulated and evaluated ad hoc (p.2), something that the writer of the thesis has seen happening too often in the gaming industry. The idea of strategy is to give guidance and coherence to all actions the organization and the individual team members take (Rumelt, 1998), limiting the ad hoc behavior to achieve set common goals and strategies. This plays a vital clue and direction with the questions as the alignment of actions with the strategy helps us identify the complexity of the company's business strategy.

Business strategy is also something more than just setting goals and measuring them. It is about adapting to changing market trends (Rumelt, 1998, p2; Vermeulen, 2017, p5). This raises an interesting question: How do gaming companies adapt their strategies to the changing market landscape? As stated in the introduction of this thesis, the change in mobile gaming is constant, and market trends are born rapidly. Examples of such adaptations can provide great insight into companies' strategies' efficiency, complexity, or adeptness. These, though, require that there are processes to ensure everyone understands what this strategic orientation means for them and the company (Blumentritt, T., & Danis, W. M., 2006, p.285). What is the point of having a business and product strategy to adapt to an ever-changing market landscape if people do not understand what it means in practice?

If companies adapt to the ever-changing market landscape, it implies that they might have a well-defined market or customer segment. Luna, C. L. H., & Golightly, D. (2017, p.41) highlight multiple ways game development companies can take their customer basis into account when planning their business strategy. Primarily how to monetize them or plan their products. The set clear choice is crucial for a strategy to achieve desired business goals, which Vermeulen (2017, p.2) reflects. This means identifying a straightforward customer or market segment game companies want to target. The topic of clear identification plays one half, but this raises a critical follow-up question: How do companies keep innovating and differentiating from the rest of the competition? These innovations and differentiation are vital for internet companies to keep their competitive edge (Teece D., 2009, p. 172). If referring back to the introduction, thousands of games are available in the market. Thus, product innovation becomes vital. As the barrier of entry is low for mobile games, monetization models are the same; it is the differentiation combined with

strategy that allows companies to create value on a customer basis. Especially when combined with a transparent market or customer segment (Teece D., 2009, p.192).

Product strategy – The painful journey to turn idea into actual product

Argument can be made that proper product strategy is the key to surviving and competing in the market landscape, and it lies at the very center of the company's overall strategy (Baker & Hart, 2007). Their argument also helps to build the bridge with first topic, business strategy, through their statement that "product strategy and management lie at the very heart of business strategy and are critical to survival and competitive success." (Baker & Hart, 2007, p. 490). Researchers Schilling & Hill continue to highlight that for companies to be successful in their product development, they have to achieve two goals: Increase the customer needs fit and minimize time to market (Schilling & Hill, 1998, p. 67). Successful companies can achieve the two goals mentioned by mapping out given resources and setting development goals (Schilling & Hill, 1998, p. 67). These steps and levers embody the competitive advantage and unique value proposals for the customers. Rumelt (1993) highlights that the constant measurement and setting of the success strategy's goals and especially the output quality helps to avoid potential pitfalls of market turmoil and identify new opportunities before they might affect operating results (1993, p.1).

Product strategy's academic research offers the second half of the core component of the framework. In quite "hyperbolic" terms, the product strategy focuses on measuring the success and failure of the project from the company's financial success perspective. The mobile game, which becomes available for the consumers, represents the culmination of business strategy objectives and the end result of the development cycles. Thus, the product strategy sources offer us tools to measure how the teams and management set the success criteria. Product strategy can and should be linked to a company's business operations to maintain a competitive position; thus, these two topics can co-exist in the same space (Griffin & Page, 1996). The success of this integration can be valued with three successes: Consumer-based, financial technical, or process-based success (Griffin & Page, 1996), but more about that in the strategy implementation part of this academic framework.

Researchers Baker and Heart (2007) consider business to be like life. Full of competition where only the strongest survive and can adapt to ever-changing market conditions and customer demands, product strategy is the center of the company's overall strategy. "In our view, product strategy lies at the very heart of the firm's overall strategy and must occupy a dominant, if not the dominant, position in the firm's thoughts and actions. As such, knowledge and understanding

of the nature and practice of product strategy and management is a necessary element in developing and forming the professional manager." (p.12). This quite oblique statement justifies how global market conditions have changed the power balance from manufacturers to consumers who have no more options. In essence, innovation is about replacing old products with innovations, and product strategy is at the center of overall business strategy and how companies can keep their competitive edge in this new power balance (Baker & Heart, 2007, p.38). This highlights the importance of proper market fit and identifying targeted customer segments to maximize the company's advantages. Players are aware of business and monetization models and are willing to tolerate them as long the games are fun and offer proper incentives (Luna & Golightly, 2017, p.28-29). Hence, knowing what kind of games will be made and for whom becomes even more critical due to competitive pressures in mobile gaming. As stated by earlier authors, this naturally has to be linked back to product strategy.

Where should all these steps happen? The discussion has revolved around identifying the target market, establishing and evaluating predefined objectives, and the importance of speed. The mobile gaming market is naturally more dynamic. All these can be capsulated in seven development stages (Bramble, 2023). Bramble (2023) states, "No two development cycles will ever be the same, but even in the sometimes chaotic, always unpredictable world of game development, this seven-step structure guides developers through even the fiercest storms." These steps are visualized in Figure 1.

Stage	Objectives
Planning	Completely map out the game from its technical and market fit point of view.
Pre-production	Organize the team and map out the project further. Remove/emphasize certain features or components to make it manageable. Communicate and set goals
Production	Stage where game is developed. This is the most time and resource heavy part of the development stages.
Testing	Game is tested to find technical problems, exploits and anything what might break the game during launch.
Pre-launch	Marketing begins creating hype around the game and target potential users to maximize commercial success.
Launch	Final polish where last improvements are made before launch which happens in matter of days or weeks.
Post-launch	Game becomes available for the consumers. Begin tracking performance KPIs and continue development to further entice the audience.

Figure 1. Describing the game development stages (Bramble, 2023)

All games developed follow the mentioned steps with slight alterations due to, for example, available resources, team size, or time expectations (Bramble, 2023). Hence, the product strategy and its details manifest throughout these steps.

Product strategy is though much more than setting targets and managing expectations. It is also about measuring results. For all projects and their strategies, the most recommended measurement is the one that measures the product's competitive advantage compared to the market (Griffin & Page, 1996, p. 493). This measurement has to follow throughout the product creation steps and adapt to different business and product strategy goals in practice (Griffin & Page, 1996, p. 492). Hence, one way to measure the depth and complexity of product strategy is to find out how long "its tail is" and whether it will carry throughout the product development process.

2.2 Strategic communication: Beyond good plans to effective communication

As the research objective is to understand further how team members understand the strategy and implement it in their daily work, it is crucial to look a little beyond definitions of business and product strategies with their characteristics. Steve Jobs is credited with saying, "Strategy is figuring out what not to do," but do team members know what to do in the first place after the strategy

is formulated and described to the team members? Secondly, how do these strategic plans or initiatives materialize in action?

Combining different strategy implementations and how they manifest within different ranks (Li et al., 2008) creates a perfect context for us to ask specific questions from the interviewed companies in two different ranks: Management and employees. The different managerial levels and implementation strategies help us better understand product and business strategy decisions and the people behind them. The researchers define it as an implementation gap (Li et al., 2008, p.22). Managers have a complete picture of the strategy and what it will mean for the organization, as they are the ones who created it. Suppose it is not communicated clearly to the rest of the organization or is not being committed entirely heartedly. In that case, it can mean that team members do not have the whole picture, thus creating a gap between management consensus and employees' vision of implementing it. This is where guidance from the management becomes essential. If the management team can guide and support team members, they will provide the groundwork for realizing the strategy (Li et al., 2008, p.16).

In the academic framework, the issue of failure in communication or implementation is a crucial topic to address. Research must delve into these two subjects and their manifestations within the organization. To comprehensively explore these matters, examining the flip side of the coin is imperative. This approach can provide valuable insights into initial research inquiries. Particularly, regarding the second research question regarding understanding strategy, this aspect gains significant relevance. Understanding how strategies falter becomes a pivotal consideration, as outlined by Beer & Eisenstat (2000, p. 31-32), who identify six distinct levels of failure.

1. Top-down or laissez-faire senior management style – Using top team for administrative matters rather than strategic management and discomfort with conflict:
2. Unclear strategy and conflicting priorities – Exists hand in hand with number five. For example, competing strategies over shared resources.
3. An ineffective senior management team – An example of management working in silos and refusing to cooperate with the rest of the teams due to fear of losing power.
4. Poor vertical communication – Problems in communicating between team members and managers.
5. Poor coordination across functions, businesses, or borders – As in number two.

6. Inadequate down-the-line leadership skills and development - Lower managers do not learn new skills to lead change through new opportunities: no coaching or training.

These six problem levels create a vicious rat wheel if they exist alone or in combination. They can be grouped into three levels: Quality of direction, quality of learning, and quality of implementation (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000, p. 32).

Beer and Eisenstat (2000, p. 32) state that "An ineffective top team, top-down or laissez-faire senior management approach and unclear strategy are related" under the direction quality. It summarizes all the problems that a lack of clear and compelling strategic directions can cause within the team. Lack of choices, confrontations, or mixed signals due to lack of clear direction and decisions (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000, p. 33). In a gaming company context, this would mean an unclear willingness to clear destructive projects, unclear production requirements, or a basic understanding of what kind of games the developer would make for the market.

By lack of learning research, Beer and Eisenstate refer to poor vertical communication, which means that information is not moving up or down in the organization, affecting strategic consensus and stripping it of opportunity to see problems ahead, identify opportunities, or obliterate safety indicators (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000, p. 33-34). If, for example, a gaming company expands its project's complexity but does not offer any ways for managers to react to those plans or keep them up to date, that would be a clear indicator of lack of learning.

Quality of implementation occurs when lack of coordination drives different company functions to different competing directions or managers are not correctly updated on the technical or skills required to achieve new set goals (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000, p. 34). This creates a situation where managers might not be able to act independently to achieve set goals or know how to react if uncertainties arise. In gaming companies, this would materialize in the form of unrealistic set goals that the team is clearly incapable of achieving.

This implementation gap and the silent killers do not by themselves offer exciting questions but, when combined with the previous topics about product and business strategy, open new possibilities:

- For example, Rumelt R. (1998), how do example team members define vital strategic objectives?

- For example, Beer, M., & Eisenstat (2000) asked how familiar are the team members with the company's business and product strategies?
- Per Blumentritt, T., & Danis, W. M. (2006), how would they define core business and product strategies?
- Per Li, Guohui, and Eppler, is there a gap between management's and employees' definition of strategy, and do employees get enough support from the management to achieve set goals?

The above three points highlighted by researchers offer vital clues to find answers to two research questions:

1. How are these strategies understood by managers and team members within these companies?
2. How these strategies influence decision-making throughout the product development framework?

Maybe due to the above reasons, managers and team members do not understand strategies or implementation is not what is expected.

2.3 Implementing strategy – turning into reality

Speed and tempo are the critical elements of implementing the strategy and turning mere words and PowerPoint slides into actions.

As the implementation and how strategies materialize in decision-making play a key role in third research question, "To what extent do these strategies influence decision-making throughout the product development framework?" analyzing the building blocks of this transition process from a business and product strategy point of view. They are the foundation of this academic framework. This limitation, though, highlights further study in this field.

So, how are strategies implemented into actions? Researchers Berman and Hagan (2006) say one way is to integrate technology and strategy into the company's core (p. 30-31). This benefits the company by leveraging technology to make existing business strategies more scalable, tackle emerging opportunities, and disturb the market (Berman & Hagan, 2006, p.28-29). Berman and

Hagan (2006) identify following actions to achieve proper integration can example happen through (p.29-31):

1. Consider technology as core input – Viewing technology as a core business principle rather than a separate enabling function of business strategy.
2. Revisiting strategy – As technology changes rapidly, companies should constantly revisit strategy to take advantage of the highly competed environment.
3. Manage emerging business opportunities – Separate organizational procedures and policies to manage emerging business opportunities that surface due to technology.
4. Plan to disrupt – Understanding the power of technology can change business or market opportunities quickly. This has to be taken into account in assumptions and long-term plans.
5. Manage context – As technology develops rapidly, companies should diversify their portfolio of capabilities and opportunities.
6. Focus technology on the customer's context – Technology has to solve customers' problems. This has to be linked back to solutions and problems businesses want to cultivate to tackle those problems with their solutions.

As gaming companies are highly technology-driven and base their performance almost solely on their products, one might ask whether gaming companies' strategies are integrated into the decision-making process or influence the decision-making process.

If knowing that combining strategies with decision-making can cause positive results, how do companies ensure that teams' actions and decisions align with selected strategies? Researchers Li, Guohui, and Eppler (2008) highlight clear goals, organizational structure, leadership from managers, communication, and incentives as the key factors to guarantee alignment throughout the organization's hierarchy (p.30-31). This highlights that a good implementation of strategy is more complicated process than people believe. It is a joint effort from everyone in the organization to change their ways of thinking and how they work. Cooper (1984) supports this observation and highlights that strategy alignment in various product stages can thus bring benefits to the whole organization if processes are in place to support decision-making (p.6-7 & 22-23).

Linking previous topics of technology-driven innovation, implementation success, or strategic alignment cannot be mentioned without two significant components: Resource allocation and metrics.

In order to be successful with new product development, companies need to meet two criteria: Maximizing customer needs fit and minimizing time to the market (Schilling & Charles, 2015, p. 67). Schilling and Charles (2015) summarize it by stating that "successful firms are those that articulate their strategic intent and map their R&D portfolio to find a fit between their new product development goals and their current resources and competencies" (p.67). The companies can identify gaps between intentions and available resources by researching strategic initiatives. When strategic goals and product intentions have been identified, the gap can be closed with budgeting and scoped capabilities (Schilling & Charles, 2015, p. 70). In a gaming company context, this implies that companies must be realistic with their product intentions. It is not very sensible to try to achieve high-quality games, which might require hundreds of developers if experience, resources, or staff are not there. This raises an interesting question: how would gaming companies proceed with allocating resources to achieve set strategic goals most efficiently through product? Not only to achieve the company's strategic goals but also to mention expectations of speed and market fit.

One way to approach resource allocation is to set success measurements, which are tried to project strategy. This allows us to expand the link between capabilities and gaps with strategy. Researchers Griffin and Page (1996) state that "the most appropriate set of measures for assessing project-level success depends on the project strategy" (p. 478). Naturally, there are multiple different kinds of measurements for the project, but three dimensions are considered most successful: Consumer-based, technical, and financial (Griffin & Page, 1996, p.479). Consumer-based measures satisfaction, market share, and revenue. Technical measures development costs, competitive advantage, and speed to the market. Financial performance measurements profit, ROI% & margin goals. It is crucial to distinguish here that projects can be measured in two levels: Product portfolio-wide or by individual project basis. The latter is considered the most accurate because each project is unique in its composition. This makes measuring a project from the three dimensions point of view to determine success or failure (Griffin & Page, 1996, p.479).

In gaming companies, development is always ongoing on two levels: New projects under development and maintaining existing products through liveops. How would the above points translate

to relevant questions about how strategies live through their actions? Luckily, researchers (Griffing & Page, 1996) recommend three simple questions that can be adapted to qualitative interviews (p. 479-480):

1. What specific measures should firms consider using to determine the success of individual product development projects, depending on the project strategy?
2. Does the emphasis on different dimensions change depending on the project strategy?
3. What measures should firms consider using to determine product development program success?

To conclude implementation by returning to the topic mentioned in communication: Failures. If it is to believe earlier points, the implementation of strategy is made out of a few critical parts in gaming companies: Implementing a technology-driven strategy to the core of the company, complete alignment to the same strategy through organizational structure, budget resources, and capabilities per product goals and finally set. Goals per three dimensions of customers, financial, and technical aspects. Failure, though, can linger in every step. Beer & Aisenstat (2000) list six silent killers of strategy implementation (p.31), which are listed in the communication chapter. There are ways to fix these problems in implementation strategies, which are covered to inspect potential ways how companies can that strategies implemented correctly (Beer & Aisenstat, 2000, p. 35):

1. A leadership style that embraces the top-down direction and upward influence – Managers advocate direction and learn from the team feedback.
2. A clear strategy with clear priorities – The top team creates and discusses the strategy with the employees.
3. An effective manager team with members possessing a management orientation – The team formulates a familiar voice through internal discussion. It creates and maintains the organizational context to implement the strategy.
4. Open communication – The top team and lower levels openly discuss the organization's effectiveness.
5. Effective coordination – Effective teamwork integrates activities around customers, products, and markets across the organization.

6. Down-the-line leadership – Managers with the potential to develop skills and new capabilities to support strategy and organization are given apparent authority and accountability.

The above points highlight the straightforward steps in how companies that might be falling behind in implementation can improve the overall process of turning the discussed and determined strategies into actions.

3 Methodology

This chapter includes a breakdown of the selected methods for this research.

The mobile gaming business is changing; gaming market decreased 2022 first time where mobile gaming dragged down the market (Statt, 2022). The examples in the introduction only represent the tip of the iceberg of how the market changes and how gaming companies react. Some can survive and thrive in this new environment, while others fail miserably. The thesis writer has had his fair share of both realities. The research and the chosen methodologies have to reflect this reality; thus, it is considered to utilize qualitative research everywhere possible.

As explained in the introduction, this thesis will be qualitative driven due to the nature of the topic, selected research questions, and the objectives set for it. The thesis will utilize:

- Case study as research strategy.
- Qualitative research approach.
- Qualitative face to face interviews as research method.
- Deductive content analysis as an analysis method where existing strategy literature works as a guiding principle for question formation and finding themes among the answers.

Qualitative research stresses the constructed nature of reality, the relationship between the research topic, the researcher and the situation surrounding the enquiry. Quantitative study emphasizes the measurement of the analysis of the relationship between processes and variables (Denzin, Norman & Yvonna, 2008, p.8). Hence through the qualitative nature and the objectives of this research, which aims to contribute by adding value to the topic, can and should be preferred over quantitative (Denzin, Norman & Yvonna, 2008, p.8). As this thesis topic has a highly intricate and well-defined scope, it is only natural in this stage that the research is conducted through qualitative interviews in deductive analysis method utilizing framework of game development and roles, research questions, and hypothesis.

3.1 Research strategy– Case study

Considering the objectives the thesis writer has set for this research and the potential impacts the thesis might have on its readers, the thesis is constructed in the form of a case study, as case study allows to tell a compelling story to tell why the research was necessary, steps taken to achieve the results and the impact the research will make (Martinsuo & Huemann, 2021, p.831-832).

As researcher Kosch (2020) details “Case study research involves a detailed and intensive analysis of a particular event, situation, organization or social unit (p.1). An example in the field of business is used to understand complex real-life situations and complex topics by selecting one or more case examples of a larger group (Yin, 2018). As the intention is not to conduct quantitative interviews for multiple gaming companies through surveys, the case study pairs exceptionally well with case study research strategy and method.

Case study as a research strategy offers immense opportunities when considering this thesis:

1. The aim is to investigate the degree of sophistication and comprehension in the selection of strategies by mobile gaming companies. Hence the focus is set in an organization (Kosch, 2020).
2. A hypothesis has been formulated, suggesting that gaming companies perceive their strategies to be in place, yet lacking crucial elements for achieving complete efficacy. This hypothesis aligns with the three research questions. The case study is also focused on certain phenomena researcher wants to focus (Kosch, 2020).
3. Interviews are employed, involving visits to the companies and the interviewing of individuals across various levels within the company hierarchy. The number of companies considered for this study is restricted to a maximum of four. As researcher Yin (2018) states “One of the most important sources of case study evidence is the interview” (p. 161).

Further to the above points, which represent vital parts of the case study by defining the research questions, selecting the cases (company requirements), and data collection (interviews), it fits well with other parts of the research. The objective is to gain insight into intricate phenomena, specifically the depth of strategic comprehension within the chosen companies, and subsequently derive conclusions from this understanding. Ultimately, research can achieve three more vital

elements of the case study: analyzing the data (reviewing the answers), drawing conclusions, and reporting the findings.

The research questions for this study are:

1. How sophisticated are mobile gaming companies' business and product strategies?
2. How are these strategies understood by managers and team members within these companies?
3. How these strategies influence decision-making throughout the product development framework?

These research questions align with the aim to understand how mobile gaming companies utilize strategies and how different teams in the company hierarchy perceive them. How the questions are also formed suggests a high fit with the case study format as studying a contemporary set of events over an area that is not in control (Yin, 2019, p. 43, p. 44). An exciting academic framework also helps us build the necessary bridge between what is already known and opens opportunities for new discoveries (Stake, 1995, p. 15).

Findings and interpretations are going to be reported in IMRAD format to meet the objectives of creating the academic foundation for further strategic research in the field of mobile gaming companies and offer vital insights for existing gaming companies who want to improve their existing strategy work.

- Achieving base for future research – IMRAD is the most popular reporting style in the academic world to report new findings (Wu, 2011).
- The flexibility – what is known, what is not known, and why the study was done (Introduction); who the participants were, how the research was carried out, and how the results were evaluated (Material and Method); what was found (Results), and what the study means for the general appraisal of the topic (Discussion) (Todorović, 2003, p. 205.)

The writer suspects that the discussion part of the IMRAD allows us to fully delve into the correlation of existing literature (academic framework) and qualitative results collected through interviews thanks to its flexibility to turn as many rocks as possible and the general coherence of IMRAD (Heintz, 2018).

3.2 Data collection

As the research problems revolve around how mobile game companies utilize strategy in their product decisions, if at all, it is expected that the data collection is done through qualitative interviews. This helps us to find cause-and-effect relationships with the answers, academic sources used, and research questions. Academic framework works as lenses that allow to see new things that interviewed companies typically see (Merriem & Tisdell, 2015, p. 66).

Qualitative research approach has benefits that justify it over quantitative:

- Deep and rich data – As research questions and hypotheses revolve around how game development companies perceive strategy, how team members understand it, and how they act upon it, case study research strategy is superior to quantitative in finding this data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).
- Flexibility – All game development companies are different based on their team sizes, market focus, and position with their product; thus, case study research strategy offers the flexibility to interview them as individual cases (Charmaz, 2014).
- Participant voice – To support the above point, it is very likely, based on the writer's hypothesis, that companies perceive strategies from various angles. The qualitative interview strategy helps to consider participant voices and opinions more easily (Charmaz, 2014).

It is essential to highlight how vital qualitative data is and that data points are collected face-to-face by the writer himself. Hence, the qualitative interview methodology is chosen as the research methodology. All interviews will be recorded and translated into a transcript for further analysis. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the writer is considering the interviewee's role and company in sampling, which is a must as a part of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 88). This guarantees that the answers will help to answer research questions. The deductive qualitative interview method in semi structured form is chosen as the thesis writer has a well-defined scope, and the academic framework is built to collect data to answer the research questions. The semi structured allows us to form questions from the existing academic literature around the research topic and conduct research from bottom to bottom. How the academic sources guided the formation of research questions can be found in Appendix 5. Semi structured also allows one to have the flexibility to react to new information with proper follow-up questions, look after

specific data, and have structured questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 89). Qualitative research also allows us to follow potential leads during the interview process to find more exciting viewpoints and opinions from interviewees (Charmaz, 2014, p. 25). Qualitative interview methodology offers deep and rich data, flexibility, and participant voice. It brings one additional thing vital to achieving set research goals and answering set questions during face-to-face interviews: personal connection and trust (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 157). As the topic and the questions can be quite sensitive for the companies, the qualitative interview methodology allows us to break the ice by building trust and personal connection with the interviewed person. This and the listed factors above make qualitative strategy and qualitative interview method superior to anything quantitative can offer. All interviews will be recorded and converted afterwards to transcription to help data analysis.

Data is processed and later segmented on a first-stake company-by-company basis. After all companies are processed, we will conclude the small sample. It is crucial to understand that in the gaming industry, companies operate with different kinds of genre focuses, monetization mechanics, target audiences, and, most importantly, team sizes. These all contribute to their unique company, business, and product strategies or complete lack of them. All meaningful interview answers can be found from content analysis Appendix so:

1. Readers can draw the same conclusions from the given answers to the research objectives.
2. Readers can take the answers and use them as a reference or source for their research.

Hence, the above formatting is set immediately with identification coding to make data analysis easier and share them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

As stated in the introduction, to support the case study research strategy and qualitative interview methodology, the writer of this thesis has devised a precise segmentation for interviewed companies and persons. List of requirements for companies to be reached out to for interviews:

1. The company has to be older than one year
2. The company **MUST** have at least one product in the LiveOps stage
3. The company must have more than ten team members

The above three requirements are set to ensure that the interviews are not conducted in a company in the early stages of its journey. In the worst case, this would mean that the company is in the middle of forming its strategies, compared to companies that fulfill the above requirements and have already been implementing existing strategies. The requirements are visible in Figure 2.

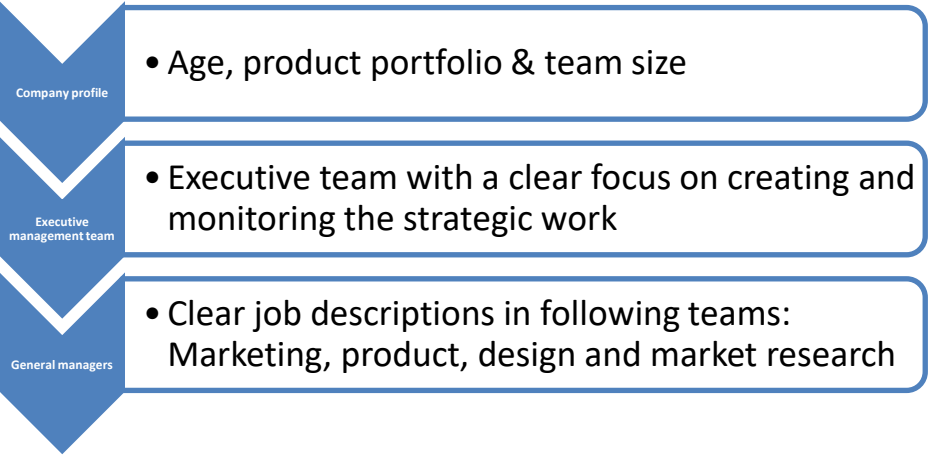


Figure 2. Team company selection criterias.

The high headcount also helps to minimize the potential of executive members having multiple responsibilities and roles inside the company. Roles are highlighted in the product strategy chapter based on Bramles (2023) game development roles: Marketing, production, design, market research, and product listed in Figure 3.

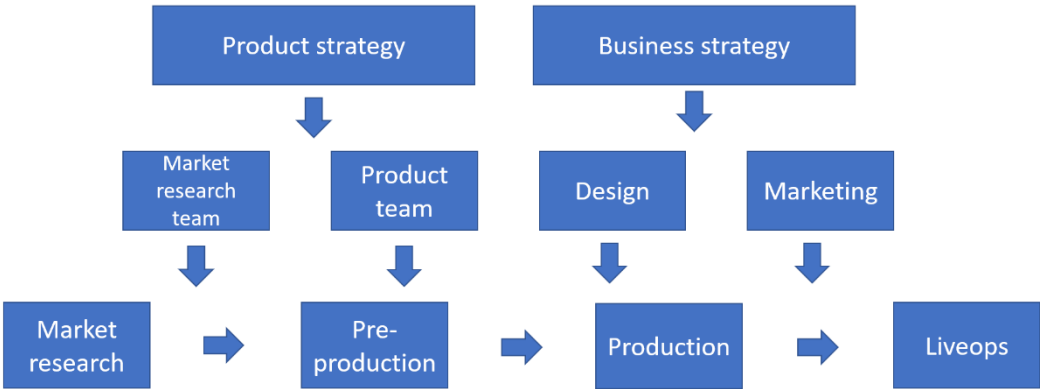


Figure 3. Interaction of game development journey and the roles (Bramles, 2023).

The current goal is to interview three companies to understand how strategies and their importance are perceived at different levels of the company hierarchy. More than two companies offer ability to collect enough data to support empirical research and thus stronger effect with case study research method (Yin, 2019, p.99). This is to curb potential skepticism and criticism regarding the in bending conclusions.

The interviews were conducted face to face, leveraging thesis writers' vast personal network with local Finnish and international companies. Interviews were conducted in English for two reasons: Referred academic material is written in English, and English is the working language in Finnish gaming companies.

Data, including answers to and research questions, are stored in Google Cloud. To avoid legal problems, the companies are generally named Company 1, Company 2 etc.; the same applies to the interviewees. CEO of Company 1, Product Director of Company 2 etc. Only the writer of the thesis knows the real identities and names of the companies and persons interviewed per best practices to guarantee that the data quality will not deteriorate over time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 174). To process the data, the answers will be segmented per company basis. The writer can sign NDAs with the companies to hide their identities indefinitely if needed.

The interviews themselves are broken into two levels:

1. Interviewing the CEO and other executive members of the gaming company.
2. Middle-level managers and team members are in charge of executing company strategy as their daily job.

The writer of this thesis is also interested in determining if there are differences in how executive members perceive the strategy compared to middle-level managers and team members. Answers to this are also considered when questionnaire answers are analyzed. The questionnaires are built with the interviewees' position in the company in mind. Also, awareness of the company's product(s) stages will help to have even more precise questions. The interview will consider if the managers have multiple positions in the company, which might affect the answers through interviewed company segmentation to avoid this. To say it bluntly, a person who works as a CEO and product manager has an entirely different perception of strategy and its implementation compared to a company where the two roles are split.

3.3 Data analysis

All answers are carefully documented online in a questionnaire database during the interview, a mandatory data storage system (Stake, 1995, p. 55). On top of that, each interview is going to be recorded with the recorder to guarantee that no nuances get overlooked in the online database. This allows us to analyze further and identify patterns and nuances to meet research objectives.

Thematic content analysis is chosen as this thesis data analysis method. As the qualitative questions are built from existing academic material, it is fitting that thematic analysis is observed from a deductive point of view. This allows to close the circle and create a comprehensive result loop, starting from forming questions and ending in analyzing the results.

Thematic content analysis is all about putting prejudices aside to open mind in a philosophical sense when researching the topic to find new points of view and opinions and conducting qualitative interviews (Sundler et al., 2019, p. 734). This allows to focus on real-world experiences and study its phenomenon. Considering overall research, finding that it combines with the selected methodologies and case study research strategy, and so do other researchers. Researchers Vaismoradi et al agree (2013), stating that "Qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis are two commonly used approaches in data analysis" (p. 398).

The process of thematic content analysis can be broken down into three unique phases (Vaismoradi et al., 2013, p. 736):

1. Achieve familiarity with the data through reading as the thematic analysis aims to understand the patterns surrounding informants' descriptions of events. The analysis begins with the researcher becoming familiar with the topic through open-minded reading by reading the data multiple times to explore experiences. The aim is to find unique experiences rather than already-known elements.
2. Searching themes and meanings. As the writer of the thesis becomes more familiar with the data, the writer of the thesis starts to mark the meanings, which are further organized into patterns in deductive way. At this point, how these meanings will be narrated and understood should be determined. As the writer of the thesis has enough patterns, themes begin to emerge.
3. Organizing themes into a meaningful context. As a last stage, the writer of the thesis organizes the meanings so themes can emerge and be dissected in a meaningful text. It is

crucial in this point that the methodological principles are fully understood here as they will guide this shaping process from meanings to themes.

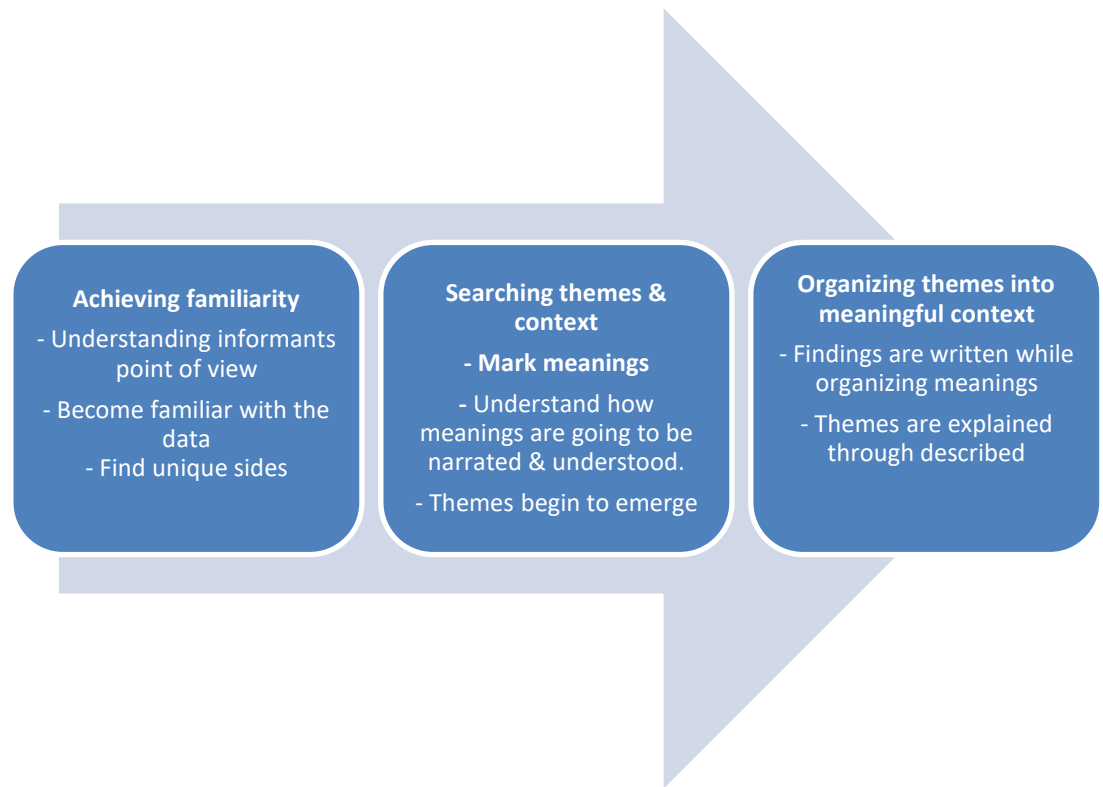


Figure 4. Describing the steps necessary for thematic data analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013)

To conclude, thematic analysis aims to identify meanings and organize these into patterns based on original data. The conclusion is to write the themes based on the original study aim and context (Vaismoradi et al., 2013, p. 736-737).

In the context of the research on strategies in gaming companies, the above means that the data will be qualitative interview material. The themes and meanings are used to answer set research questions through content analysis.

Content analysis

The thematic content analysis is based on the recorded transcriptions and analyzed answers, factored from the existing literature and overarching research questions. The writer of this thesis wants to offer examples of it is completed step-by-step. Figure 5 shows the exact step and work order.

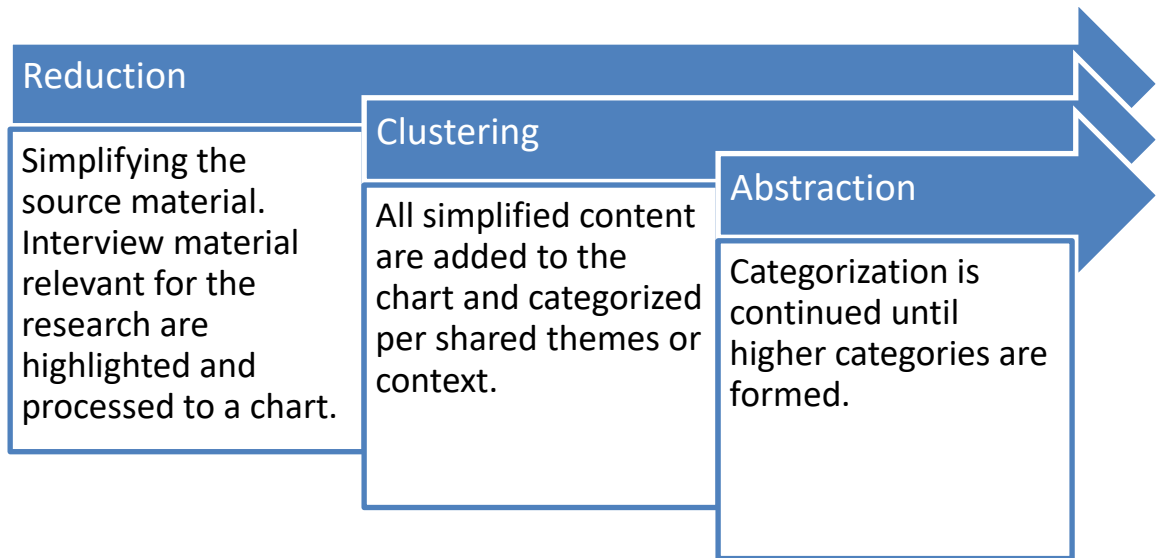


Figure 5. Reduction, clustering, and abstraction in content analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

An example of reduction is analyzing answers related to the extent to which strategies influence decision-making shown in Figure 6.

Original statement	Reduction
We decided to create an asynchronous multi-player game.	Game concept and tech focus
Product decisions, influenced by business and product strategy, led the game in a direction to reach a wider audience.	Strategic impact decision impacting the wider audience
People may take time to focus on new goals if they are buried in their routines.	Challenges in implementing new goals
Changes have occurred due to unclear sandboxes.	Unclear sandboxes and conscious deviation
External business factors may necessitate adjustments in approaching current production.	External factors

Misalignment, unclear communication, or factors beyond control may cause issues.	Outsourced development and misalignment issues
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Figure 6. Example of reduction based on to what extent these strategies influence decision-making (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 11-12).

Further, reductions are listed under the same categories which have a similar kind of meaning as in Figure 7.

Reduction	Categories
1.Alignment with creative freedom(cases 1)	IMPLEMENTATION & COMMUNICATION
2.Alignment with strategy(cases 1)	
3.Anticipation and adaptation(cases 1)	
4.Challenges in implementing new goals(cases 1)	
5.Clarity in strategy(cases 1)	
6.Confidentiality(cases 1)	
7.Defining role of strategy(cases 1)	
8.Design and technology integration(cases 1)	
9.Documentation and communication for clarity(cases 4)	
10.Exposure and product gating(cases 1)	
11.External factors(cases 1)	
12.External influence(cases 1)	
13.Factors for successful implementation(cases 1)	
14.Frequent evaluation and alignment(cases 2)	
15.Game concept & tech focus(cases 1)	
16.Game enhancement and meta-game aspects(cases 1)	
17.Guidance by metrics(cases 2)	
18.Guidance on budgeting(cases 1)	
19.Impact on decision-making(cases 1)	
20.Impact on external factors(cases 1)	
21.Influence on work approach(cases 1)	
22.Key performance indicators for measurement(cases 1)	
23.Market expansion and audience focus(cases 1)	
24.Marketing and monetization strategies(cases 1)	
25.Outsourced development and misalignment issues(cases 1)	STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT
26.Outsourcing for temporary scaling(cases 1)	
27.Player motivations and live operations(cases 1)	
28.Portfolio expansion and team size(cases 1)	
29.Regular updates and open communication(cases 1)	
30.Risk allocation on product(cases 3)	28.Product goals

31.ROI approach(cases 2) 32.Routine integration(cases 1) 33.Strategic impact decision impacting wider audience(cases 1) 34.Strategies as objectives(cases 1) 35.Team leaders and resource allocation(cases 1) 36.Team structure and development(cases 1) 37.Testing and kick-off(cases 1) 38.Timelines as a crucial aspect(cases 1) 39.Uncertainty of succesful implementation(cases 1) 40.Unclear sandboxes and conscious deviation(cases 1)	32.Product goals 30.Product goals 35.Business goals 31.Business goals 25.Business goals 38.Measurement criteria 22.Measurement criteria 14.Alignment practises 9.Alignment practises 1.Alignment practises 5.Success factors 13.Success factors 8.Success factors 29.Success factors 39.Challenges & considerations 12.Challenges & considerations 37.Challenges & considerations 10.Challenges & considerations
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Figure 7. Example of reduction based on to what extent these strategies influence decision-making (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 12-13).

A similar kind of reduction, clustering and abstraction was completed to all research questions:

- How sophisticated are gaming companies' business and product strategies – Appendix 1
- How are these strategies understood by managers and team members within the organization – Appendix 2
- How these strategies influence decision-making throughout the product development framework? – Appendix 3

For the sake of easier visualization when answering research questions, more visual figures are being used to connect the categories.

3.4 Reliability, credibility and ethics

This chapter covers the methodologies and processes utilized in this research to ensure the reliability and credibility of the qualitative research conducted for this thesis.

The study adopts a qualitative research design, utilizing face-to-face recorded interviews as the primary method to collect necessary data. This approach was chosen to capture in-depth insights into the sophistication of business and product strategies in Finnish mobile gaming companies.

Face-to-face interviews are going to be conducted with a sample size of a maximum of 15 participants representing three distinct gaming companies. The use of interviews facilitated a nuanced exploration of participants' perspectives on business and product strategies, ensuring a rich and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. All interviews will be recorded using two sources: an online web format with predetermined questions that the interviewer will populate during the interview and interviews that will also be recorded for further literature and confirmation of answers and given data.

Validity will be ensured by aligning interview questions with the research objectives. The writer of the thesis has carefully crafted questions to elicit responses that directly address the sophistication of business and product strategies in the gaming industry. The sources for the questions can be found in the next chapter.

To guarantee the credibility of the findings, triangulation will be achieved by conducting interviews with participants from three different gaming companies. This approach allowed for the cross-verification of information, increased the robustness of the study, and removed potential bias coming from a single interview (Denzin N., 1978, p.303). As a part of the research protocol, interviews will always be conducted face-to-face at the company's office.

The writer of the thesis maintains reflexivity by acknowledging his own perspectives and potential biases. The writer of the thesis fully understands these biases and perspectives, as mentioned earlier in the introduction chapter of this thesis. This is done so the writer of the thesis can highlight new rich information, empower interviewees to share relevant information, and properly evaluate the research process and outcomes (Finlay L., 2002, p.532).

One notable challenge is getting everyone to participate in the interviews. As writer of the thesis suspects, the topic can be quite personal and safely guarded secret of the company. Thus, earning the trust of the companies is going to be a challenge to achieving data collection within the given time frame.

As anonymity is important to protect the identity of both companies and the interviewee the writer of the thesis will never:

- Write the company's or employee's name everywhere. All companies will be referred to as Company One, Company Two, and Company Three.
- Reveal employees' real names. The employees will be referred to by their job title.

- Original online answers and audio files of the recorded interviews will never be shared online, which might compromise the anonymity of the interviewees or the participating company.

These steps reflect the necessary steps to consider data confidential (Wiles et al., 2006, p.4).

Researcher Arifin (2008) states that “in a qualitative study, ethical considerations have a particular resonance due to the in-depth nature of the study process” (p.30). The protection of human subjects and their participation (Arifin, 2008, p.30) plays a significant role in this thesis. The anonymity of the interviewees and the companies, being referred by job titles and companies as Company One, Company Two and Company Three, have been mentioned previously but not the volunteer participation. Volunteer participation is the guiding principle of this thesis. Participants should always volunteer, understand what is being asked, be informed of the scope and have the right to participate or decline (Arifin, 2008, p.30). For this reason, following working order was created to achieve set ethical goals when interviewed companies were being reached out:

1. Company CEO was reached through available channels.
2. A call was arranged with the CEO to explain the purpose of the thesis and why they would be perfect candidates for the thesis. The volunteer nature of the participation was always highlighted in the call.
3. If the CEO found the topic interesting, the CEO was asked to arrange group email with the interviewees in a fashion which fits the company’s culture.
4. After the introduction from the CEO, the writer of this thesis sent individual emails to each interviewee to lock in-person face to face interview time.
5. In the beginning of the interview, the interviewee was informed second time of the scope of the interview, the volunteer status, the emphasis of anonymity and the nature of the questions. These steps guarantee the ethics are handled effectively from the interviewees point of view (Arifin, 2008, p.31).

Ethics were not only limited to communication and how interviews were conducted, but also how the data was being processed afterwards. Data was never processed in a public place and participants, nor their managers, had access to the data afterwards. Meeting voice recordings were kept in an offline computer and surveys behind encrypted and password protected cloud server

only accessible to the interviewer. Since the first reach out email to the data processing, interviewees and companies were only referred by their pseudonym, even in the surveys and recordings, as per ethical data processing requires (Arifin, 2008, p.31). Examples of the sent emails and the flow can be found from Appendix 6. Note that to protect the anonymity of the interviewed company, names and emails are censored. This respect for participants privacy and anonymity goes hand in hand with the selected APA7 academic style (American Psychological Association, 2017, p.4). The academic standard on which this thesis is written upon. As this thesis has no commissioner, no ethical violations or organizational demands rose during the interview, data analysis or writing process which would violate the integrity of the ethics code (American Psychological Association, 2017, p.4). The writer of this thesis also refrained from personal opinions and points of views throughout the thesis process by acknowledging own biases (American Psychological Association, 2017, p.5).

After the completion of the thesis, data will be stored in two places.

1. USB stick – Including interview recordings and their transcripts
2. Password protected cloud hard-drive – Surveys and answers

Even in storage, all identifiers are not in present. Companies and interviewees are referred to as their pseudonym while the writer of this thesis being the only one who knows the identities of the participants. This way of data storage is designed around European University Institutes ethical code of conduct (European University Institute, 2022).

4 Interview Results – Understanding the mechanics of the selected strategies

Results consist of the outcomes of the interviews collected between June and October 2023 for this thesis in a qualitative, in-depth interview format. All three company interviews resulted in a total of 12 individual interviews. All but one was recorded due to the informant's refusal to get her voice recorded. Following mobile gaming, professionals were interviewed per company shown in Figure 8 Interview questions form can be found in the Appendix 4. Similarly, academic sources of each interview question can be found from Appendix 5. How companies were reached out, in planned matter which complies with the ethics of this research, can be found in Appendix 6.

COMPANY ONE July 2023	COMPANY TWO September 2023	COMPANY THREE October 2023
CEO Designer Product manager Marketing manager Market research	CEO Design Product manager	CEO Design Product manager Growth manager

Figure 8. All of these people were interviewed due to their high importance to the mobile game production pipeline (Bramble, 2023).

Reduced and categorized answers per research question can be found from the Appendix 1, 2, and 3.

Thematic content analysis is used to find similar themes among the companies to find the results to answer research questions:

1. How sophisticated are mobile gaming companies' business and product strategies?
2. How are these strategies understood by managers and team members within these companies?
3. How these strategies influence decision-making throughout the product development framework?

This is done to clearly distinguish the case and the context to introduce findings in such a manner that they are easy to identify and justify and allow the reader to understand the nature and representativeness of the findings (Martinsuo & Huemann, 2021, p.827). This also allows us to close the deductive qualitative research loop and find promising patterns based on the academic sources which worked as a source of the interview questions (Yin, 2019, p.212).

Quotations from the interviews are being used to highlight key findings. As this research and the selected topic can share light to company's business secrets, anonymity is justified (Yin, 2019, p.297). Interviews focused on the five key roles per Bramle's (2023) game development participants: CEO, product, design, marketing, and market research.

4.1 Introducing the interviewed companies

Three companies participated in the interview: Company One, Company Two, and Company Three. All companies consider mobile devices as their priority platform. Their business model also heavily relies on hybrid monetization of combining in-app purchases with advertising placements to generate more revenue per user. All companies are currently, in various research stages and degrees, expanding their portfolio for similar reasons: to mitigate risk and expand revenue streams from different audiences.

Company One – Leading multiplayer PvP developer.

Since its founding in 2012, Company One has focused solely on offering multiplayer experiences for its player base. The product and business development has been driven by a few core factors that interviewees highlight: Offering player agency where players are in charge of the experience and emphasizing this motivation and sense of belonging through the community. The company's unique competitive factor comes from its emphasis on low-performance mobile devices. This, in the company's own words, has helped them to expand and secure a foothold in the markets where lower-end devices are not supported. The company has been operating with one product until recently, and the decision to expand the product portfolio was made quite recently.

Company Two – Mayhem experience and emphasis on motivations.

Company two has a colorful history of being founded in the early 2000's to first produce entertainment solutions to local TV channels. As this business strategy ended up not being sustainable, the company pivoted to mobile platforms, where they found immediate success. The company currently has one big live-operated game, and the company is looking into expanding its product portfolio based on the lessons learned from the success of its current title. What makes Company Two stand out is the absolute focus on player motivations. Player motivations trickle down to everything that the company does: Feature design, player experience, and audience targeting. This by one interviewee, gives their brand flexibility to offer experiences to the wider mobile gaming audience, which is not possible for their bigger competitors.

Company Three – Snake growing new skin. The third time does the charm.

Company Three has a long history of remolding its business and product strategy to meet the market demand since its founding in 2015. In interviews, it was highlighted that the current iteration of their business and product strategy is the third one they are currently going through. This gives the company and its employees vast experience in reshaping the goals and milestones but, most importantly, their product strategy. From the lessons learned, the objectives and, most importantly, the technical and know-how capabilities of the company are thoroughly thought out and planned to reflect the financial goals set by the company. In its current iteration, the business and product strategy emphasizes past development capabilities taken into a new direction. Through this direction, the company aims to carve out its position in the marketplace, offering player experiences never seen in the market.

4.2 How sophisticated are mobile gaming companies' business and product strategies?

Content analysis of three companies' interview results brought four overarching topics that affected the depth of companies' business strategies: Business strategy itself, performance evaluation and metrics, innovation, and technical capabilities, and finally, market development monitoring and adaptation as shown in Figure 9.

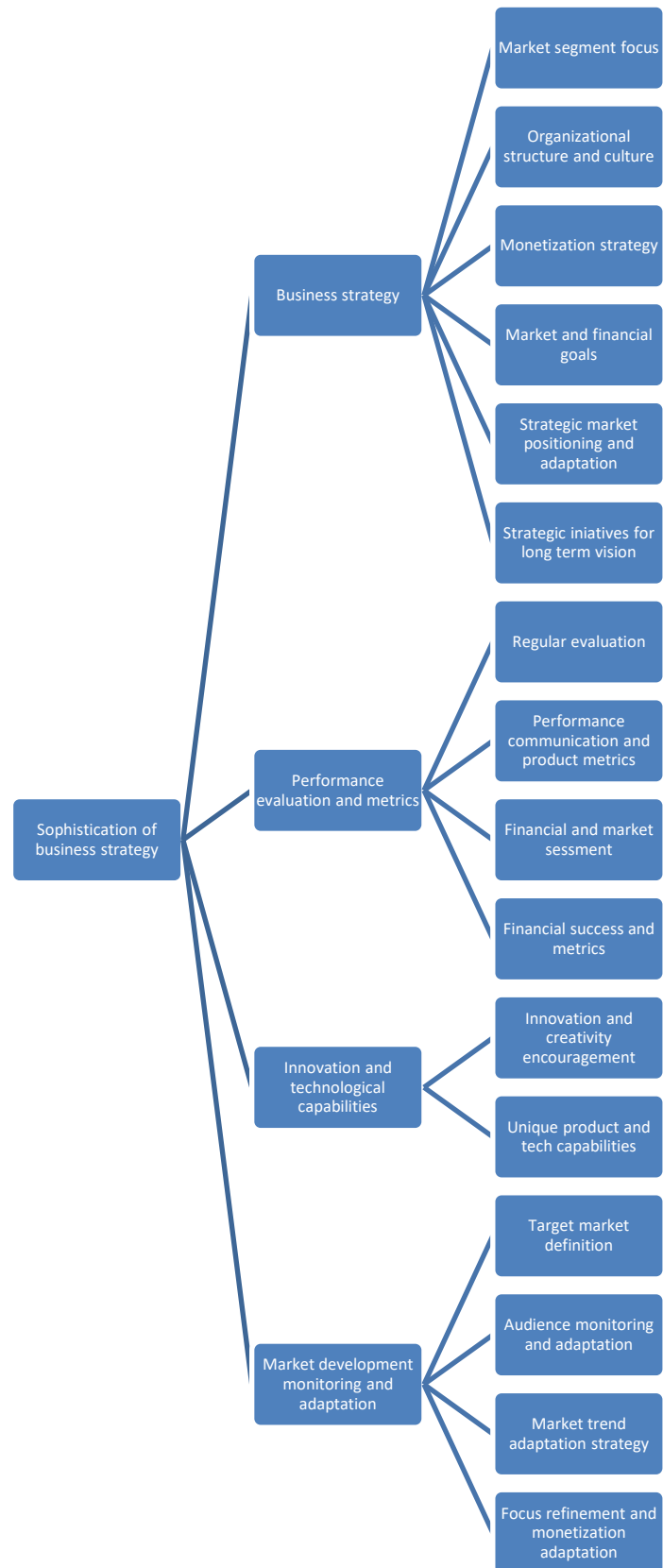


Figure 9. Categories found through content analysis regarding the sophistication of business strategy.

Business strategy

Business strategy is the compass for all three companies, which dictates their market segment focus, organizational structure, monetization strategy, and market and financial goals.

Company One's business strategy centers on new product introductions and refining existing game liveops experience. The company's understanding of consumers and the target market informs measurable goals, communicated clearly for managerial guidance. The strategy serves as both a guide for current actions and a framework for future growth (Berman & Hagan, 2006, p.31) (Rumelt, 1998, p.5).

Informant 1 from Company One:

“Our company creates mid-core games that are fun to play on casual and competitive levels. The organizational structure is team-based. The company strives for a committed and appreciative culture where people are the highest priority.”

Company Two recently transitioned its business case from full ad monetization to a hybrid model, incorporating ad revenue and in-app purchases. The company strategically defines its customer base based on player motivations, a unique approach compared to Companies One and Three that shapes its business strategy and value proposition. However, this player-centric strategy presents challenges in KPI measurement. Despite setting clear expectations for game types and portfolios, along with a long-term vision, the company has hard time verifying the results to confirm the right direction of the strategy (Berman & Hagan, 2006, p.30) (Rumelt, 1998, p.9).

Informant 1 from Company Two:

“To understand the player's motivations, focus on this like social multiplayer arcade mayhem. Like a genre of games.”

Informant 2 from Company Two:

“This player motivation thing that I've now been talking about causes. It's the thing that we've been talking about lately quite a bit. It's. Hard to validate things that OK can. Can this actually bring good results? Because it's hard to isolate that effect of, like, Oh yeah, this part of the impact that we see on the KPI is coming from because we were targeting this motivation versus coming from something else, especially since we have a lot of organic users.”

Company Three is currently undergoing a strategic shift towards hybrid casual games, aiming to define its unique space in the market. Although assessing the effectiveness of this shift for its current products is challenging, the company relies on action-oriented measurements as an alternative for the time being until real user data becomes available to assess the selected course. Recognizing the competitive advantage of major publishers, Company Three focuses on innovation, differentiation, and the capabilities of its tech team to carve out its own niche. The balancing act involves identifying target markets and approaching them with superior products.

Informant 1 from Company Three:

“We are avoiding direct competition with the big players in the market, so we have to find something new, something that includes PvP communication with players and human-to-human interaction.”

Informant 2 from Company Three:

“We, of course, check where we are going with every milestone of every game; every month, we check the financials, the prospects, and the timelines of products and then combine that with the business and the growing plan.”

Performance evaluation and metrics

Sir Winston Churchill is credited with saying, “However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.” The same applies to strategies, as from time to time, one must see how they perform and whether the selected courses are still appropriate (Rumelt, 1988, p.1). All three companies reflect their selected strategies for product performance. Thus, as Winston Churchill said, they look at the results.

Company One employs a structured performance evaluation framework to measure its operational efficiency. This framework is designed to assess key areas such as financial performance, operational processes, and customer satisfaction. Clear benchmarks and metrics are established to objectively measure performance against predetermined goals at the project level (Rumelt, 1998, p.9).

Informant 2 from Company One:

“We try a few models to check how we do as a business. Company and management send annual or quarterly objectives on a time/duration basis to see if we meet those objectives.”

Informant 3 from Company One:

“Quantitatively, by tracking product and business metrics focusing on key performance indicators.”

Company Two focuses on clear expectations for game types and portfolios, creating a unique value proposition. While the strategy defines customers and tools, the effectiveness measurement is focused on game metrics. The company's emphasis on a competitive edge and unique value propositions introduces distinct motivational elements within the gaming ecosystem. However, the specifics of how these motivational elements are measured in terms of performance remain unclear due to the difficulty of measuring and confirming them (Teece, 2010, p.187).

Informant 1 from Company Two:

“Take some time to look at the market and try to develop different unique implementations.”

Informant 2 from Company Two:

“So I think everybody is trying to think in that way. You know. How can we be innovative in our way? Be it gameplay-wise or anything so. Or with the in-game content.”

Informant 3 from Company Two:

“We are in a happy situation where we have a bit of a Unicorn product that doesn't necessarily work with the same rules as the other products in the market, as in, at the most, most games need to. They need to work through the LTV higher than CPI equation and optimize both the user acquisition funnel and the LTV side of things to make ends meet. While we have such a huge organic amount of organic user DAU, we don't really need to worry about the user acquisition side of things in that regard. All we need to cover our CPC and CPI costs; like, sure, we're doing the optimization with the whole like.”

Emphasizing flexibility in avoiding direct competition with major players, Company Three's business strategy sets product milestones for testing its effectiveness what they call gating. Financial metrics, including Return on Advertising Spend (ROAS) and profitability timelines, play a pivotal role in evaluating the success of the strategy. The technology acquired through talent is deemed crucial for increasing innovation and maintaining a competitive edge against the competitors. The target market is clearly identified based on age and gender segments. The long-term vision revolves around achieving ROAS positivity, scaling proven products after launch, and providing evidence of the selected strategy's success to board members and investors (Berman & Hagan, 2006, p.30) (Rumelt, 1998, p.7).

Innovation and technical capabilities

To achieve a competitive edge in the modern internet-based market, technology, and selected strategies have to work in conjunction to drive growth (Berman & Hagan, 2006, p.28). All companies put way higher levels of corporate technology into their production. Company Three is taking this further by acquiring talent to expand its capabilities and using this new technology as the foundation of its competitive edge with future multiplayer products.

Company One emphasizes innovation and technological capabilities through practices like prototyping and a culture of active market research participation. Metrics are used to measure and track the effectiveness of innovation initiatives, acknowledging the necessity of continual technological enhancement (Berman & Hagan, 2006, p.33).

Informant 2 from Company One:

“That mostly comes down to new products when it comes to research. When we create a new setup for potential products, we want to do competitive research and find where the opportunities are. We actively try to avoid making a game on the same platform that is similar to something already in the market.”

Driven by a player motivation-centric approach, Company Two fosters innovation within its operations to gauge new ways to implement features fitting their motivational focus. The business strategy sets expectations for game types and portfolios, incorporating long-term visions and unique differentiators through motivations. The company strategically utilizes partnerships to complement its capabilities and achieve set goals. These partnerships align directly with customer insights and the target audience, reflecting a commitment to customer-centric decision-making (Teece, 2006, p.172).

Informant 2 from Company Two:

“Take some time to really look at the market and try to come up with different unique implementations.”

Informant 1 from Company Two:

“We've been having this, as we call it, two dream days, where, you know, we take a day basically for everybody. Then they can kind of work on their own project that's associated, of course, with our live game, and maybe tackle some certain problems that we know are still there in the game, and we need some kind of solution for it. You know that, in itself, has this kind of creative problem-solving coming with it.”

Company Three views technology as a pivotal force for innovation, creating an internal environment that identifies new market opportunities. The company strategically focuses on the Gen Z generation (ages 24-45) to cultivate an audience that evolves into paying users over time. The long-term vision is geared toward profitability through title releases starting in 2024, aligning the entire infrastructure and team efforts with this goal (Berman & Hagan, 2006, p.33) (Luna & Golightly, 2017, p.4).

Informant 1 from Company Three:

“Quest always gets to that product, which is very innovative. New features. It could be a new system or new core or taking a different look at the existing core. So that's where it falls into the product side of it. Also, in terms of user acquisition, we are not just relying on the traditional paid channels or traditional paid methods. We also want to take in Community management, for example, as the big. Piece of the puzzle, we want to also focus on building the community, bringing in organic, and bringing in virality because all other big studios are spending money.”

Informant 4 from Company Three:

“It needs to meet two criteria. One is it's unique, and the second is it's also appealing because if you just end up doing a very, very unique niche thing, then it will not get that market. So the goal is to bring in that innovation as well as the acceptance of that. So, in each space this is how we bring in innovation.”

Market development monitoring and data

Understanding your audience and customer base can be considered as one of the key elements in achieving a competitive edge over the market (Cooper, 1984, p.12). All three companies that were interviewed understand this and have formed their own ways of looking into the market and pinpointing their core audience. How this is done varies: Where Company One identifies this through demographic means, Company Two does it purely through the motivations of the players.

Market development at Company One relies on a clear understanding of the user base and target market. The company sets goals for expanding its product portfolio with short-term milestones for measurement. While long-term vision is acknowledged, it tends to be more aspirational than detailed. Continuous monitoring and data analysis play a crucial role in adapting the strategy to evolving market dynamics (Berman & Hagan, 2006, p.30-31), (Rumelt, 1998, p.8).

Informant 1 from Company One:

“The company has also learned a lot from existing products, and that audience has grown. They are now older customers, and their behaviors have evolved. We look into what we can offer our target audience.”

Informant 2 from Company One:

“Yes, we do. Our target audience is rather clear. And yes, we are making changes to our products depending on what is going on in the world right now. How is our target audience shifting, or how are they acting in the world right now?”

Company Two's business strategy extends in various directions, providing a clear focus, differentiation, and audience targeting. While the initial measurement approach was rigid, the company has adopted a more pragmatic direction. Innovation and differentiation remain central to the company's plans, and partnerships are leveraged to fill capability gaps. These partnerships are intricately tied to the company's customer-centric approach, with decisions revolving around products consistently linked back to customer motivations and target audiences. The adaptable strategy undergoes occasional small corrections to align with chosen courses or larger market dynamics. The focus on customer needs and audience targeting remains the key focus of the company's strategic decisions when it comes to product decisions (Teece, 2010, p.175) (Luna & Golightly, 2017, p.4).

Informant 2 from Company Two:

“So, as I said, we try to learn more about our players. So we have a rough idea of who our players are, and whenever we make our features, we keep that in mind.”

While Company Three's business strategy is in an early phase, primarily covering revenue and ROAS targets, the efficiency of this strategy is measured by the speed at which products are released to achieve profitability. The company understands the significance of innovation in adapting to market shifts. Leveraging its history through previous strategies to foster innovation compared to competitors. Despite not offering clear user data or a specific target audience focus, the strategy provides flexibility for the company to pivot and adapt to market conditions successfully. The CEO highlights the adaptability and successful evolution of the business strategy in response to the dynamic landscape of mobile gaming (Berman & Hagan, 2006, p.31), (Rumelt, 1998, p.7).

Informant 4 from Company Three:

“So, whatever we do, profitability becomes the yardstick to measure the effectiveness of our strategy.”

Informant 1 from Company Three:

“Moving to hybrid casual was the biggest move, I guess, and this was decided even much, much before people started talking about hybrid casual.”

Informant 2 from Company Three:

“We have all the US systems built. We have all the analytics built. We have a team that now understands and knows how to build a hybrid casual game that is”

Content analysis of three companies' interview results brought four overarching topics that affected the depth of companies' Product strategies: Product definition and shaping, strategic alignment, execution and adaptation, and organizational considerations as shown in Figure 10.

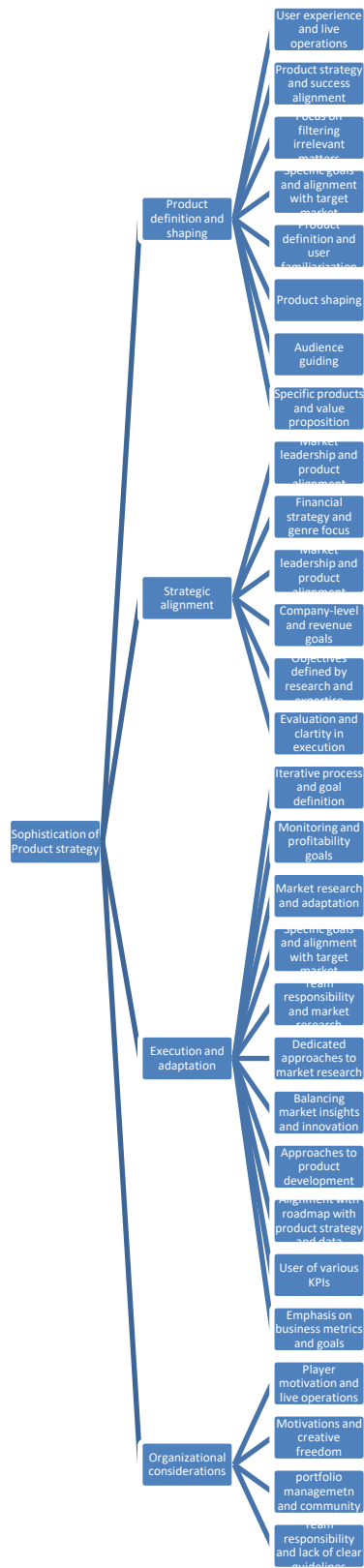


Figure 10. Categories found through content analysis regarding sophistication of product strategy.

Product definition and shaping

Linking product and business strategies successfully together can create positive outcomes (Blumentritt & Danis, 2006, p. 283). Many companies have formed their own ways of combining these two strategies together to serve their objectives. Company Three, having the most experience in strategic adaptation, showed the most intriguing way of combining these strategies but, unfortunately, lacks real user data to verify it.

Company One's product strategy serves as a set of clear parameters intricately linked with business objectives. It shapes the organization's workings, detailing the market needs and aligning with business goals (Baker & Hart, 2007, p.171). The strategy creates a product sandbox within which the company operates, understanding its target market and consumers and leveraging internal strengths (Baker & Hart, 2007, p.497-499). Product strategy extends to business-driven metrics throughout projects, guiding decision-making and fostering product diversification through portfolio management (Schilling & Hill, 1998, p.70).

Informant 3 from Company One:

"Regarding business objectives, it impacts big live operation games, so we want to have X number of players actively playing. "We want to reach a certain amount of success and have X amount of players and make more that kind of games". We have set such objectives."

Informant 1 from Company One:

"1st thing we start with the strategy is to define market opportunity. This way, we have business and product talking in the same way and how the product can meet those. Product, business, and design talk at the same level. This helps everyone talk and address their problems. 2nd step is agreement. How can we grow the game to take advantage of that market opportunity? Do we speak the same language, have connections to the country, and have reach?"

The current product strategy of Company Two aligns with the expanded business strategy, focusing on monetization expansion and targeting users through motivations (Rumelt, 1998, p.7). Emphasizing online multiplayer mechanics, the new strategy correlates directly with business objectives. The product strategy provides clear directives in production, vision, and communication within the team. It outlines how the team should work, directing actions and planning to expand

the live game through motivations, design decisions, business goals, and time considerations. To support this strategy, the team adheres to clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) referred to as North Star KPIs.

Informant 1 from Company Two:

“So we’ve been delving more and more into this online multiplayer segment of the mobile game space, and now, it seems to be the main point of our product strategy. The business objectives, well, you know, obviously it has a direct correlation because we need to think with this in mind. So, whatever the business objectives are, they need to be directly supported.”

Informant 2 from Company Two:

“The framework of a modern live-operated free-to-play game, of course, defines to that extent what the KPIs and whatnot that we benchmark and use as response variables are.”

In Company Three, the product strategy is crafted with a mathematical formula aimed at sustaining current hybrid casual games, focusing on high potential in growth markets with an orientation to technical sophistication (Cooper, 1984, p.13). The strategy sets clear expectations for features, especially human-to-human interaction, which is necessary to sustain this strategy and gain a competitive edge against bigger developers (Luna & Golightly, 2017, p.15). Despite facing challenges similar to the business strategy due to untested market waters, the company establishes specific objectives and goals for its product strategy in the form of gating. This strategy provides a sandbox for team members, offering clarity and parameters for games and the company's survival.

Informant 4 from Company Three:

“We have to do the hybrid ones, so we have to have a fast return of ads, and then we have to create the LTV long-time value plus the value for the players. And we have to keep it approachable, and because we need to build the audience, we can't compete with the people who can buy everybody from the market. So we have to be sure that there is an element that gives the possibility of company, community building, or possible virality.”

Informant 1 from Company Three:

“The idea, the game concept, if that doesn't have those elements. We need to fulfill our services better because they have to be rethought. Then we need to test it, and then we need we need certain key metrics to be met that they can. Trust and invest in the project more.”

Strategic alignment

Baker and Hart (2007) say it is straightforward: “In commerce, as in life, the primary and basic objective is to survive” (p.4). Strategic alignment was one of the unique categories discovered in this research, which emphasizes how companies align efforts with team members to keep everyone aiming in the desired direction. Companies Two and Three demonstrated the most action-oriented approach to alignment. Company Two emphasizes audience motivations through a roadmap, and Company Three enables their work through product gating, which is formed from the Company’s product strategy.

The product strategy, defined by target genres and user experience emphasis, establishes communicable and measurable objectives for teams at Company One. It plays a crucial role in getting things done by setting parameters and objectives for feature development and design. The strategy allows room for innovation by embedding market insights and research into team workflows to find Company One's market fit (Griffin & Page, 1996, p.482). While roadmaps exist for both live and prototype projects, there is a current gap in clearly linking strategy with measuring success, especially for products in the prototyping stage.

Informant 1 from Company One:

“All these are communicated to the team/people, and these goals are set as a team. It's fairly reasonable way to get people involved and prepared for what is going to come.”

Informant 3 from Company One:

“We have specific objectives. Company-level yearly objectives.”

Informant 1 from Company One:

“For new games, we have a roadmap for expectations for time window, monetization, and release. It affects product strategy.”

Informant 5 from Company One:

“1st would be for the prototyping team to create a presentation that is shown to the company where feedback and ideas are shared. 2nd idea is when the presentation turns into a prototype, management greenlights it based on feedback by allocating resources and staff to work on it.”

Built around business objectives and a deep understanding of the targeted audience's motivations, the product strategy's objectives are tied to the game's financial performance and, thus, the company Twos success (Baker & Hart, 2007, p.327-328). While business KPIs are easily tracked, isolating and validating player motivations poses challenges. Despite these challenges, the team possesses a good understanding of motivations and employs working methods to translate these into actions. The product strategy's impact is evident in features, designs, and the roadmap, shaping the direction of the product.

Informant 1 from Company Two:

“The roadmap is built on top of these player motivations, and that roadmap is derived from the product strategy of catering to these player motivations.”

Informant 2 from Company Two:

“Work has a direct correlation with the contents we do or the contents that we ship. So even in the label space, like nowadays, we've adapted this mentality a bit more closely that OK, you know, we sit down, we talk about the feature or like a set of features.”

At Company Three, the product strategy resonates with competitive advantage achieved through the business strategy, where the company's technology fosters innovation visible to users through game design and the types of games the company can create compared to competitors in similar space (Luna & Golightly, 2017, p.7). The strategy is aligned with identifying potential games in the market, iterating concepts, and shaping timelines for development. Despite the lack of player data or metrics to validate success, the product strategy sets clear expectations, objectives, and goals communicated through product gating. It acts as a backbone, shaping the look of games, and contributes to a competitive edge through innovative use of technology (Bramble, 2023).

Informant 1 from Company Three:

“Well, the the backbone of it. It's the sound report for the concept. And for the. Execution. It sets the expectations for the features. It's the sound report for the concept and for the execution. It sets the expectations for the features.”

Informant 2 from Company Three:

“We do. We are now making the multiplayer platform, which will be our own developed in-house, which is extremely difficult to make, but we chose that path because we want to sort of be innovative and offer. Games that are very difficult, if not impossible, to copycat and that offer players the kind of experiences.”

Execution and adaptation

It is a difficult task to form a strategy, but Hrebiniak (2006), as cited, says it is even more difficult to implement in the organization (Li, Guohui & Eppler, 2008, p.3). Companies have to eventually implement the selected strategies and choose wisely how (Li, Guohui & Eppler, 2008, p.5-6). All three companies utilize a roadmap in one form or another in their product pipeline. What makes Company Three stand out is the heavy emphasis on gating and KPIs to either let project survive or end it.

Despite some misunderstanding within the company about the details of product strategy, the unique value proposition and portfolio expansion are identified at Company One. Resource allocation and roadmapping may not be fully grasped, but product Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are well understood and measured (Griffin & Page, 1996, p.492). The impact of targeted user groups on product decisions is well understood, and the company's competitive edge and value proposition significantly influence decisions for both new and existing products.

Informant 3 from Company One:

“Everything we do for the product is then new innovation, feedback from the community, and market research, competitors, etc., which is that single goal to keep users in, keep them happy, and make the user spend.”

Informant 2 from Company One:

“We are trying to create games are good competitive multiplayer games every single day. We try to provide a great experience to players we want to turn into paying customers.”

Informant 1 from Company One:

“We want our players to feel unique and skilled when they reach certain milestones. We want to enable them to go from zero to hero and enjoy their journey spiced up by a constant stream of content.”

The product strategy at Company Two emphasizes two key points: defining the motivational target market and aligning with business-driven KPIs (Rumelt, 1998, p.1). The roadmap directly manifests this strategy, shaping tasks that influence team priorities and work. The motivational audience stands at the core of the product strategy, with the company understanding its target market well based on motivations. As the company aims to captivate this audience with its games, their motivations serve as the company's value proposition. While currently a single live game developer, preliminary work is underway to prepare for expanding the portfolio. The product strategy's impact is tangible, influencing everything from feature development and prioritization to marketing.

Informant 1 from Company Two:

“In quite good detail, what are the measures of profitability with a given team size and this? And what was the second part of the question? It's communicated quite regularly because we are like the overall burn rate is communicated, and we know how much the product is making, how much it needs to make, and what's the difference there.”

Informant 2 from Company Two:

“It definitely worked because we were addressing the player's motivations, or well, it didn't work because we failed to address the player's motivations, or the execution was bad, or the communication was bad, or there was something else that prevented it.”

Informant 1 from Company Two:

“That the roadmap is built on top of these player motivations, and that all then roadmap is derived from the product strategy of catering to these player motivations.”

Company Three utilizes a roadmap to test projects in various segments, ensuring marketability, low CPI, and engagement (Griffin & Page, 1996, p.491-492). Despite lacking first-hand user data, the company checks the definitions of the product strategy at each segment of the roadmap. The product strategy's impact is tangible, influencing feature development, prioritization, and marketing decisions. The company recognizes the validity of these decisions is questionable without user data but relies on its established process.

Informant 4 from Company Three:

“So, our road map is based on the product gating system itself and for each product. We have those timelines and the milestones already aligned, and that's what the team will continue working towards. In the end, everything else aligns to launch that profitable hybrid casual game.”

Informant 3 from Company Three:

“Yes. The product gating is the main yardstick. So, if we see that a certain game has potential, it has good numbers. It has good draws; we always invest more resources there than, let's say, something where we don't even know whether that idea is going to fly.”

Organizational considerations

Organizations are different in the way they operate. An example selected business strategy gives characteristics of how companies perceive their position in the market (Griffin & Page, 1996, p.482). This means that variety is there in how interviewed companies emphasize their focus points in their products. In the example of Company Three, it all lies in the execution of their product gating.

While there might be a lack of full understanding of product strategy within certain departments, the mechanisms are recognized at Company One. The details and reasons might be hazy, but the awareness of strategy is present. The correlation between KPIs and product strategy is not fully

understood, highlighting an area for potential improvement (Baker & Hart, 2007, p.272). The product strategy's materialization in the product roadmap is clear in steps, showcasing a structured approach despite some internal nuances. Overall, there is a continual effort to bridge the gap between understanding and implementing an effective product strategy within Company One.

Informant 2 from Company One:

“We have goals, and we are always monitoring our progress toward achieving them. We have those for every single team, but. I know what my own goals are, but I don't know what the goals are for the production team.”

Informant 1 from Company One:

“We need to define EVERYTHING, including the biggest points per product. We need to define the market opportunity, growth hack, game overview, plan, innovation, UI & UX, what tech is, and meta and monetization. With all these defined, the company can set clear expectations for the product.”

The product strategy's effectiveness and success are monitored internally, with a focus on learning and improvement at Company Two. Business and marketing metrics, including Daily Active Users (DAU) and monetization metrics, are closely monitored (Griffin & Page, 1996, p.491). The product strategy's impact on the roadmap is evident, providing a clear and tangible influence on what the company aims to achieve and how it plans to meet its goals. The company demonstrates adaptability by laying the groundwork for portfolio expansion, ensuring the strategy evolves with the changing dynamics of the gaming market.

Informant 2 from Company Two:

“It directly correlates with the contents we do or the contents we ship. So even in the label space, like nowadays, we've adapted this mentality a bit more closely that OK, you know, we sit down, we talk about the feature or like a set of features.”

Informant 3 from Company Two:

“Many KPIs naturally that we are following up to monitor the success of the product.”

The product strategy's straightforward approach for Company Three involves releasing hybrid casual games with a multiplayer aspect enabled by the company's technology to offer a more competitive player experience and game flow to players (Luna & Golightly, 2017, p.29-30). It sets specific objectives and goals communicated through KPI gating, offering a reality check, expectations, and deadlines for the team. The strategy's expectations serve as a backbone for team aims and activities. The company emphasizes virality as a competitive advantage, utilizing planned components to gain an edge over competitors (Griffin & Page, 1996, p.486). The product KPI gating acts as a universal roadmap for the company and individual products, covering timelines, deliverables, and development possibilities. The company acknowledges the need for clearer guidelines in portfolio management as it expands its development efforts to three titles. The underlying KPI for initial guidelines is 130 days ROAS, with plans to refine guidelines in the future. The product roadmap is primarily perceived as a communicative tool for visualization and planning purposes.

Informant 4 from Company Three:

"I guess we don't have any guidelines or processes defined on how we do the portfolio management, but it's mostly case by case at the moment. The case is that the game that has the best chance of reaching 130 ROAS will be the game that we support the most."

Informant 4 from Company Three:

"The broad portfolio is maybe a bit too big for work. If you can call it flight path or KPI gating systems, yes, those we have in place, and they are very carefully managed."

Informant 2 from Company Three:

"We do have a roadmap. It's more of a development roadmap that these things go as we plan this. The roadmap and this is how things would look like, but obviously it. Changes month to month as we learn how the games do and how we are doing with everything. But how is it? Aligns with the kind of product. And portfolio management. Not so much. I think. Roadmap. It's just it's a communication tool rather than a tool to do anything like that. Any management? It's a visualization of what you want to do or what? What do you have planned to do?"

4.3 How are these strategies understood by managers and team members within these companies?

It is not only important but vital that everyone in the organization understand what strategies mean in practice within the organization so they can be implemented properly. Not doing so can cause harm to the organization and its competitive opportunities (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000, p.29-30).

In this chapter, we will look into how well strategies are understood by managers and team members.

Content analysis of the results of three companies' interviews showed that communication and understanding were defined by four categories: Communication effectiveness, strategic alignment and awareness, implementation support, and employee engagement as shown in picture Figure 11.

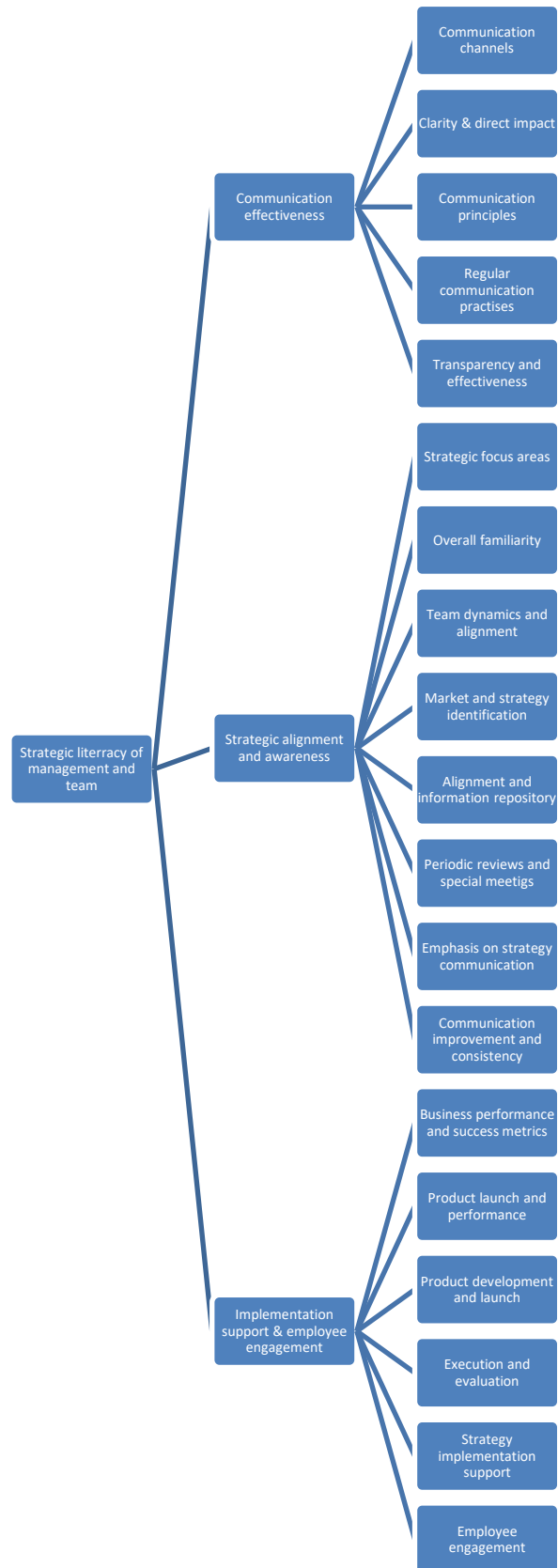


Figure 11. Categories found through content analysis regarding how managers & team members understand strategy.

Communication effectiveness

How well and often do companies talk about their strategies and objectives? They definitely should, as not doing so can cause a wide range of problems, such as poor vertical communication, conflicting priorities, and more, which affect the operational execution of the company (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000, p.32). Companies Two and Three tackle these issues with their own protocols and rituals, where discussions always revolve around the product through roadmap or product gating. Company One emphasizes strategic understanding among the managers and leadership but leaves room for interpretation or lack of understanding among its employees.

In Company One, there is a structured format for discussing the practical implications of the strategy, with top management playing a supportive and guiding role for team members. While not universally understood throughout the company, managers are notably well-informed and supported, ensuring a level of clarity and guidance. This structured approach to discussing practical implications allows the company to dodge potential implementation issues. (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000, p.35).

Informant 3 from Company One:

"I would consider myself on a scale of 1-10, eight in familiar with business and product strategy and involved with it. It guides my decision-making, taking new products forward and setting up teams for it."

Informant 5 from Company One:

"I would say that the managers are rather familiar, but regular employees probably are not that familiar if they don't show any interest in any extra effort."

Informant 4 from Company One:

"It's understood, but it's mainly it doesn't really fall into their responsibility. There is that much at the moment. More of a product, product management, and then CEO and design are the parts that tackle this at the moment."

For Company Two, the team members have a clear understanding of the strategies, and their impact is evident in shaping budget allocation, feature selection, design choices, and even regular team meetings. The roadmap serves as a tangible manifestation of the selected strategies, providing a strong framework for work. However, a critical element missing is consistent communication

methods or ceremonies outside roadmap meetings, leading to occasional lapses where some individuals may lose track if not present during meetings. Even though lapses, the roadmap gives the company an important communication point for the whole organization (Baker & Hart, 2007, p.383).

Informant 3 from Company Two:

“It Impacts me quite drastically because it basically defines what I'm doing on a day-to-day level. So, like, mentioned all the roadmap and all that is derived from the product strategy and then that, of course, dictates what I'm actually actually doing.”

Informant 2 from Company Two:

“I think everybody should play; everybody should understand what role they play in increasing the days active or the lifetime or the out of now of the players. So that's the level where they want to be, and we try to for the one metric we follow as the studio is the number of paying users.”

The current product and business strategy, resulting from a hybrid casual pivot without user data, are effectively communicated to team members and managers at Company Three. The company holds regular company-wide rituals to discuss new strategies and work, maintaining transparency and effectiveness as long as the core message is focused. With a heavy emphasis on the product in the current strategy, measurements, and practices ensure everyone stays up-to-date through product checkpoints. Rehearsals of implementation and strategy merging are crucial factors in how management guides and supports team members, integrating strategies into decision-making and communication. These rituals and communication alignments make sure that every manager and team member is aware of the tasks ahead and where the priority lie (Li, Guohui & Eppler, 2008, p.30).

Informant 1 from Company Three:

“They are very, very much familiar, and we have these meetings every week where everybody else is also aligned, not just the managers but the entire team, on where we are, where we want to get to, and the entire system is very transparent.”

Informant 3 from Company Three:

“Reiterate where we are with the strategy execution in our weekly meeting. What have we decided to do, where are we with the plans, and how are the next couple of months?”

Strategic alignment and awareness

Not to be mixed with communication effectiveness, strategic alignment, and awareness mean that people actually understand the underlying strategies and what they mean in practise. Most importantly, what is their role in it (Li, Guohui & Eppler, 2008, p.14-15). Company Two and Three continue placing high emphasis on repetition and action orientation. Unfortunately, at Company One, based on the interview answers, this lack of company-wide alignment and awareness leads to situations like team members fully understanding, for example, the impact of business strategy.

The understanding of the strategy within Company One varies. Management and leadership possess a clearer comprehension as they directly influence decision-making. However, the lack of systems to guarantee widespread understanding within the organization creates gaps in strategic knowledge. Communication of the strategy tends to be implicit, with gaps affecting product decisions, such as in monetization and user segmentation. Although management support is responsive, there is room for more active participation in ensuring strategic awareness throughout the organization. These challenges can cause issues in the long term, as a lack of active participation can cause misalignment (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000, p.32).

Informant 1 from Company One:

“The upper management is quite familiar as they are heavily involved. We try to have all employees involved if we change objectives. It increases their familiarity with the topic, but it's being defined sometimes, and we don't spend much time remembering it. We have not guaranteed that everyone understands it the same.”

Informant 2 from Company One:

“There is a difference in understanding which user segments we are targeting and what kind of monetization we apply. And what kind of monetization works best with that target or product strategy.”

Company Two exhibits a strong alignment of strategies with budget allocation, feature selection, and design, highlighting a clear understanding among team members. The roadmap serves as a visual representation, reinforcing strategic alignment. However, the absence of constant communication methods poses a challenge, potentially causing intermittent lapses in strategic awareness (Baker & Hart, 2007, p. 211).

Informant 1 from Company Two:

“I think it's usually more in the communication, so and then and then like reaching this shared understanding. So I think sometimes it can be that, you know, one stakeholder assumes something that OK, you know, like I communicate at this point to the rest of the. Of the leads, for example, when we're working with like a road map, and you know you leave it at that bot, then this kind of like sparring doesn't happen that OK, you know. Are we actually going to take this forward, or if we take it forward, maybe there wasn't, like, a common understanding? Why, you know, so there can be these gaps for sure.”

Displaying the current state and direction of the strategy is crucial for company Three. Communication principles, including time-bound and frequent communication, are established to guarantee alignment and understanding within the company. The CEO takes responsibility for ensuring everyone is aware of the strategic position. Strategies are seamlessly integrated into the decision-making process, providing teams with anticipation, financial insights, and budget situations that influence decisions. This emphasis on communication and outcomes aligned with objectives (Li, Guohui & Eppler, 2008, p.5).

Informant 2 from Company Three:

“Hopefully, I'll just refer again to the communication principles and the size of the company that we have to be. There's no doubt that everybody needs to know what they're doing by and what their profile is.”

Informant 1 from Company Three:

“They are very, very much familiar, and we have these meetings every week where everybody else is also aligned, not just the managers but the entire team, on where we are, where we want to get to, and the entire system is very transparent, and everybody knows where they want to get to.”

Informant 4 from Company Three:

“It's CEO, and one of the key principles is open communication and keeping people up to date. He personally takes care of all these. The material finds its way to slide decks that are presented to the whole team regularly.”

Implementation support and employee engagement

Support from top management will help the middle managers implement the strategy (Li, Guohui & Eppler, 2008, p.15). In all three companies, support was there to various degrees. Company One had the most proactive management, which was always willing to help through meeting formats where relevant information was shared with all employees. Company Two's emphasis on action and execution led to situations where nonparticipants lost priority quickly. Also, P&L restrictions meant that priorities were sometimes unclear. In the case of Company Three, management received positive feedback and was always proactive in keeping everyone informed. The CEO especially took a proactive role in this process. However, one strategic decision, pursuing a multiplayer market, did cause confusion as earlier it was discussed to be impossible.

Company One excels in openly communicating strategies within the organization, backed by management support that addresses any questions. The clarity extends to the understanding of goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), fostering a cohesive view of where each employee fits into the larger organizational picture. This robust understanding contributes to a more engaged and aligned workforce, facilitating smoother strategy implementation (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000, p.38).

Informant 5 from Company One:

“Yes, and we are able to. And if we have a problem, we can go straight to the CEO and ask for help. In that sense, our company is very open as we can ask the CEO to help us.”

Informant 3 from Company One:

"It's great. There are two avenues: 1. Weekly sync for big news. If there is a big decision, it's communicated to team members for feedback and their thoughts. Transparency is learned from past experiences. On a weekly basis, we know what is happening in the company. 2. If there are feedback or concerns, there are meetings where concerns/questions are asked and answered."

For Company two, the impact of strategies is evident in budget allocation, feature selection, and design, demonstrating a level of implementation support. However, the lack of constant communication methods may lead to occasional disengagement among team members who fall "off the wagon," which can cause issues in implementation and understanding priorities (Baker & Hart, 2007, p.252).

Informant 2 from Company Two:

"I don't think there are very strong practices there to ensure that we are on the same level. I'm sure we have all kinds of company meetings and things periodically where these things are communicated and repeated, and this is discussed."

Informant 3 from Company Two:

"Well, the level of support for implementing the strategies is always restricted and constrained by the realities of P&Ls, the company's resources, and these types of things."

In Company Three, strategies receive open communication within the company. Management provides support to clarify any questions, fostering an environment where team members understand goals, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and their roles within the broader organizational context. This transparent communication and understanding contribute to high employee engagement and support for implementing the strategies. Despite some past growth pains, the company's deep immersion in business and product strategies allows decisions and infrastructure to align effectively, providing implementation support and enhancing overall employee engagement (Li, Guohui & Eppler, 2008, p.30-31).

Informant 4 from Company Three:

“I think they are very open and motivated, and they want to have a sort of read back at that team when they can prove with their answer that they got it.”

“That's been awesome, and there has never been a day when management came and forced something on someone.”

Informant 2 from Company Three:

“I would say that when we quickly decided to move to multiplayer because the opportunity presented itself, there were some surprising comments just like a month ago. It was discussed that we could not do multiplayer, but then suddenly, it became one of the key lines of the company's portfolio.”

4.4 How these strategies influence decision-making throughout the product development framework?

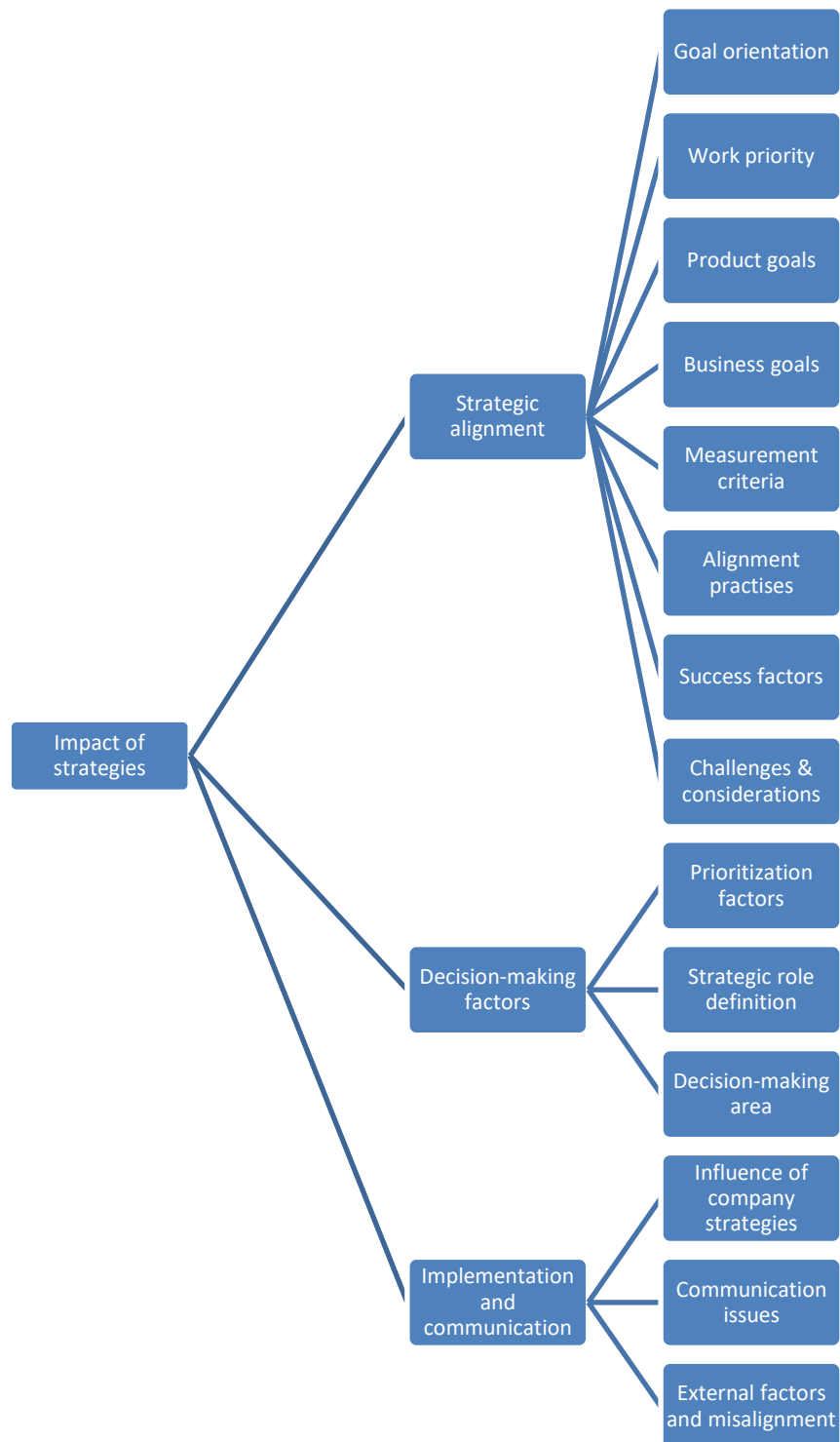


Figure 12. How strategies impact decision-making in gaming companies.

Strategies that influence decision-making can be defined by three categories shared by all companies: Strategic alignment, decision-making factors, and implementation and communication as shown in Figure 12.

Strategic alignment

Baker and Hart (2007) state how understanding our strategies and the outcomes through product gives us a good way to align for the future. “In other words, by classifying existing products as belonging to particular categories and identifying the strategies which have contributed to this outcome, we have a useful managerial tool for plotting future action” (p.51). In this chapter, we will look at how the strategies are aligned with the objectives of the companies and the work they do. Companies Two and Three, due to their utilization of roadmap and product gating, offer good examples of how strategies manifest in planning and work, quoting Company One employees show not understanding and clearly defining products can show problems in the outcome (Baker & Heart, 2007, p.51).

In Company One, strategies play a crucial role in decision-making processes. The business strategy establishes Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which, in turn, influence and guide product decisions (product strategy) (Berman & Hagan, 2006, p.32). A clear framework is set through selected strategies, providing a sandbox for teams to operate within. A/B testing is systematically conducted to measure impact, leading to informed decisions. The challenges arising from unclear sandboxes and the absence of sanity checking have been addressed through utilizing A/B testing and a constant identification of market opportunities, reinforcing strategic alignment in decision-making.

Informant 3 from Company One:

“One problem we had was that we defined the product, but the strategy kept changing. This created problems with the deliverables. One thing we have changed is that we are more aware of the changes to the strategies and how they affect products.”

Informant 1 from Company One:

“The best example of our strategy is the use of A/B testing. We formulate hypotheses, measure impacts, and make decisions based on the data we gather. The main challenge is that without a well-defined strategy, you may need to backtrack on

decisions made over several months and still fail to find the answers you're looking for because you didn't ask the right questions at the time."

In Company Two, strategies directly influence decisions and conscious thoughts. They dictate the features developed and the intended audience, with clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) guiding measurement. The product roadmap acts as a tangible manifestation of these strategies, setting timelines, expectations, and visible deliverables for the team and offering mechanisms to solve issues (Baker & Hart, 2007, p.383). The emphasis on keeping "everyone in the loop" is highlighted as crucial for the successful implementation of selected strategies. The roadmap, a direct manifestation of selected strategies, streamlines everyone's work, providing clarity on the target business objectives, development plans, and allocated time and resources (Schilling & Hill, 1998, p.76). While the roadmap serves as the primary form of communication within the team, challenges arise when not everyone can actively participate, leading to occasional misalignments attributable to external events beyond the team's control.

Informant 1 from Company Two:

"I think it just again boils down to the roadmap thinking that the roadmap is built to address these player motivations, which is then the product strategy."

Informant 2 from Company Two:

"It affects it directly. Business goals or there's some other higher-level goals, and you know it may have a very sudden or direct impact on what we can do right now or what we thought we could do maybe next month or the following months, but that knowledge now changes everything."

Strategies in the company Three play a significant role in resource allocation and decision-making. While Company Three acknowledges that merely throwing resources at a problem won't solve its core issues, the strategies serve as a guide to justify the need for additional resources (Li, Guohui & Eppler, 2008, p.25-26). Currently, there are no linked metrics or performance indicators as the company awaits the user data that will provide a reference point for its hybrid casual strategy. Strategies offer checkpoints throughout product development to ensure alignment across various teams. A successful product kickoff is identified as a vital means to align the entire team and company with the presented strategy, acting as a gatekeeper in development that dictates all decisions despite the current lack of user data.

Informant 2 from Company Three:

“It's mostly like the games in development; we can see how they are doing, the KPIs, and everything. So if we see that one game is struggling, it's easy for us to prioritize those team members, to do something else, to help out some other team, or to start something new from scratch. So I think it's mostly about, you know, just. Observing the KPIs and observing how the game teams are performing.”

Informant 1 from Company Three:

“So on resourcing, It's always the excitement of creating the product 1st, and then when you can't you have to think about the resourcing and what's what's what you can execute and, if you can't, how you could, if there is a need. To look at more resources, that has to be. There has to be a clear reason for that. Since putting in resources to somebody doesn't just solve the problems, it has to have a pinpointed need for that.”

Decision-making factors

How do strategies affect decision-making within the companies? This is an important question; as Schilling and Hill (1998) put it, “Successful firms are those that articulate their strategic intent and map out their R&D portfolio to find a fit between their new product development goals and their current resources and competencies” (p.67). Interviewing three mobile gaming companies meant an absolute focus on what they planned to do and why. This ranged from in-set goals or KPIs as in all three companies to uniquely retrospectively looking into how the team performed afterward at Company Two. Company Three, even though lacking user data, shows a high commitment to live up to Schillings and Hills words in mapping and gating their development until products are out.

Strategies evolve into objectives that serve as guiding principles for achieving set goals at Company One. The strategies also define KPIs, influencing the allocation of resources, particularly manpower, at the individual project level. Project metrics predominantly focus on time-based evaluation rather than direct ROI. The successful implementation of the chosen strategy is driven by the clarity provided through well-defined objectives and KPIs.

Informant 1 from Company One:

“For me, mainly in the production side of things, for example, we want to expand our product portfolio, and it influences team expansion. Figuring out how much resources we can have. What can those resources generate, and what can we do?”

Informant 2 from Company One:

“Strategies inform budgeting decisions by indicating where resources should be allocated to achieve the best outcomes. For instance, if a strategy involves expanding into new markets, the budget might allocate funds for market research, advertising, and market entry activities.”

Strategies have a direct impact on sprint planning and the roadmap at Company Two. The careful monitoring of spending and Return on Investment (ROI%) helps analyze the effectiveness of objectives and determines the team's buffer (Griffin & Page, 1996, p.487). Scenario work and preliminary forecasting guide the team's focus and resource allocation. Despite management not being hands-on with the product, a systematic approach ensures that strategies trickle down to the teams, influencing both sprint work and roadmap planning. Regular monitoring of sprints, retrospectives, and roadmaps provides a transparent view of how well-selected strategies align with actual work across the organization.

Informant 1 from Company Two:

“It comes from the scenario work that the team beforehand has to define that if we do this new thing, may it be a content or feature that what needle should move and how much for us to make sense to continue working on it. And then that is something that contributes to the lifetime value of the user.”

Informant 2 from Company Two:

“All the sprints have a goal, and at the end, we have a review and retro that did we do what we set out to do and did we have that impact that we wanted to have and we follow the studio finances monthly.”

At Company Three, strategies set clear budgetary limits for team sizes and help identify future needs, especially in workforce scaling (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000, p.37). In the absence of preliminary market data, strategies establish performance indicators and specific metrics for development.

Alignment throughout the company occurs during the ideation and conception of a new product, with selected strategies defining all aspects of the company's current activities. Despite the lack of preliminary user data, the team expresses confidence in the forthcoming results, emphasizing the worth of the effort invested.

Informant 2 from Company Three:

"It's solid that we know how much we have, how much we need and when and if we need temporary scaling up, we use outsourcing as a sort of extra capacity. But we will only hire new staff when we have a product packet teaching us. So, I think this goes for quite a few game companies in this situation."

Informant 3 from Company Three:

"Basically, it's now defining almost everything, so we are now, I wouldn't say, betting, but we are confident that this effort and this push with the current strategy compared to the earlier one is going to yield good results."

Informant 4 from Company Three:

"So, we have product gating, and the KPI is tied to each gating. So, we only pick the necessary features at that stage of product gating. And we don't pick up anything which doesn't align with that. So if the goal is to improve, for us, then don't do something that will just improve retention. Do something that will also improve us, so that's how we decide based on the gating KPI set."

Implementation and communication

Many strategies can fail in this stage because they are not actually strategies but more set goals (Vermeulen, 2017, p. 2). As Vermeulen (2017) continues, "Strategy implementation requires top managers to design the company's internal system that makes the selection for them" (p.4). In this last chapter, we look into how the set strategies are implemented within the three companies by simply setting what to do and what not to do. These represent selected choices that make implementing strategy easier for everyone within the three companies (Vermeulen, 2017, p.2).

Strategies have a direct impact on budget allocation and set measurable KPIs for performance evaluation at Company One. They also mold product decisions by influencing prioritization, re-

source allocation, and timelines (Berman & Hagan, 2006, p.32). However, ensuring alignment occurs through documentation and cross-team meetings. While there is an understanding of how strategies are communicated on a weekly basis, there is a noted lack of in-depth knowledge regarding the deeper mechanisms involved. While the strategies and their impacts are observable, a more profound understanding of their intricacies is currently missing. This leads to situations where management's corrective actions happen afterward.

Informant 1 from Company One:

“Design features that give us a foothold in that specific market let us expand the audience with new product development. We want to work on things where we can define our own niches and opportunities and even bring in new customers. That influences how we approach new product development and liveops.”

Informant 3 from Company One:

“Our company's strategies are pivotal in shaping how features are prioritized, resources are allocated, and timelines are established.”

Strategies offer clarity to the team by defining focus areas, reasons behind decisions, and the selection of features at Company Two. The manifestation of strategies in sprint planning and the roadmap creates a structured framework for work (Baker & Hart, 2007, p.161). The communication primarily occurs through these channels, allowing teams to understand the alignment of selected strategies with ongoing work. While the current reliance on the roadmap for communication is effective, potential challenges arise when participation is not universal, necessitating additional methods to enhance overall communication within the team.

Informant 2 from Company Two:

“Well, it basically directly it. It guides it. So, like I pointed out, this ROI approach needs to adhere to this that OK, you know what benefits it would bring us? You know, down the line, what kind of, like, KPI is going to be affected by this?”

Strategies significantly influence decision-making by guiding resources and setting measurable objectives through product gating at Company Three (Li, Guohui & Eppler, 2008, p.38). While strategies provide clear expectations and timelines, deviations can occur due to external factors or misalignment. Strategic shifts, like the recent move towards hybrid casual games, directly affect the type of products and the development approach. The strategies lack direct capabilities

to address resource allocation decisions, treating each product as an individual project, but they do oppose clear financial and time-bound KPIs. Strategic alignment is ensured through weekly rituals involving executive team discussions about the overall company picture. The company emphasizes understanding its capabilities at both the company and individual levels for successful strategy implementation, with strategies acting as an umbrella serving as a leadership and self-reflection tool.

Informant 3 from Company Three:

“There will always be places where we tend to deviate as a company. It is not intentional, but sometimes. It just happened so that, you know, either there is a misalignment, or there is no clear communication of the expectations, or it's just not in your hands.”

Informant 1 from Company Three:

“I think it's just the underlining, like an umbrella, that, OK, we make these decisions because we have this overall strategy.”

5 Discussion

This thesis aimed to explore and understand how deep business and product strategies were, how the selected strategies were communicated and understood, and how they most significantly affected game development within three Finland-based mobile gaming companies. The curiosity and need for this deeper understanding of strategic management in the gaming industry is mainly fueled by the writer's interest and commitment to the mobile gaming industry, lack of gaming industry-related research papers that focus on the topic from a strategy perspective but also the current shockwaves seen in the industry.

Three main research questions for the interview were:

1. How sophisticated are mobile gaming companies' business and product strategies?
2. How are these strategies understood by managers and team members within these companies?
3. How these strategies influence decision-making throughout the product development framework?

The topic was approached by understanding the current academic literature regarding business strategy, product strategy, internal communication, and finally, literature regarding implementing strategy. Questions for qualitative interviews were derived from the preexisting literature, and the interviews were done between July 2023 and October 2023. Littered answers were processed with content analysis methods to find similarities among the companies. The findings were more curious than originally expected. Thus the writer of the thesis considers results satisfying. The underlying themes and topics per research question were answered in a way which satisfies the writer.

The findings indicate that the three interviewed companies have quite in-depth and interlinked business and product strategies, well-honed communications that suit the companies' needs, and implementations of the strategies in place, which align with preexisting knowledge of the subjects out of which questions were formed.

All companies' business and product strategies were built upon in the nutshell understanding the identified core audience, leveraging on the company's advantages in product development, and

evaluating the success of the selected strategies through their games. Companies had a clear picture of their audience and how they could, at their best capabilities, develop a process that utilized their competitive advantage to position themselves in the market in the eyes of the audience. This competitive advantage ranged from more unique design choices offering different player experiences to consumers, as in the example of company One and company Two, to unique technology, as in the example of company Three.

All companies also had protocols in place to communicate the objectives of their respective strategies, which made them understandable to team members and how they affected their work. Most communication was done through existing weekly, monthly, and quarterly meetings where products, individual objectives, company-wide goals, and protocols were made clear to team members, which helped companies to align to the same goals. CEO and leadership support in all companies was perceived as high, and the existing support system was adequate.

Strategies also played a role throughout the product development, which was visible to every team member interviewed. The strategies become tangible through their integration into decision-making, the performance indicators are tied to decision-making, and strategies impact development prioritization and resource guidance within the companies. There were no instances where interviewed team members could not feel the impact of strategy in their work or could not see it affecting decisions.

The writer of the thesis approached this research with an open mindset, acknowledging own biases, and expected, in all fairness, more variety in the answers and more visible differences among the companies. Ethics wise interviewees wishes to stay anonymous was considered in every step of the way. Anonymity was considered in questions, data online and offline storage. Also, using data analysis methods helped to keep data from polluting from opinions. Adding direct interview quotations in the findings chapter helped to emphasize legitimacy to findings. Ethics also emphasized the volunteer nature of the survey and how the freedom to participate or withdraw from the research was highlighted various times before and during the interview. These steps highlight the strong ethics necessary for qualitative research to protect the interviewees in every step (Arifin, 2008).

As the research and the interviews progressed, it became apparent that all three companies operate in quite similar fashions when approaching their strategic work, communication, and implementation of said strategies. Naturally, there are unique variables, such as the target market

and type of games, but the core "red line" is the same. The writer finds two potential reasons to explain how the companies shared similar kinds of answers:

1. The maturity of the mobile gaming industry – Mobile gaming companies have matured to such an extent that they have already adopted practices that improve their operational capabilities. Competition, the scale of success that the companies pursue, and the general market conditions have already forced the companies that have not done so out of business.
2. The current change in the market forces companies to adapt strategic work into their DNA – All three of the interviewed companies are going through a strategic shift. Company One wants to expand its portfolio, Company Two is shifting into motivations-driven development, and Company Three wants to create a completely new audience through its technology and market position. The writer argues that these shifts would be impossible to complete without adopting the best practices and a deeper look into strategic work that links directly with product and business strategy.

As the writer was unable to find academic research on the subject of strategy focusing on mobile gaming, the writer sees these results as encouraging. Even though some interview subjects concluded that mobile gaming could not be analyzed from a strategy point of view due to the fast-changing market landscape, highlighting, for example, the Unity news, which almost dumbered many companies' profitability calculations (Coldewey, 2023), this research proved in certain extent otherwise. Mobile gaming companies, which especially focus on development and publishing, can be analyzed from the point of view of old academic literature. Where this research took qualitative and deductive research approaches combined with the case study, the next logical step from the writer's point of view would be quantitative.

The quantitative suggestion stems from one major problem the selected qualitative interview format had throughout this research: companies were not keen to talk about their strategic work in detail, which turned out to be a big problem that it almost stopped this thesis. Complying with requirements set by ethical code of conduct were slowing interviews with fast moving mobile gaming companies too fast. Companies were either referring to their current status of updating their strategic work or wanted to guard it against third parties. Due to this, the interview period lasted longer than anticipated. Personalized interviews based on roles also caused problems during the interview due to either the designated role not existing in the company or the person

having left. Due to this, 12 interviews out of the originally planned 15 were completed. Quantitative research, combined with the existing mobile gaming infrastructure organizations, would help to increase the reach of the surveys and thus offer more data faster and easier.

It is too early and risky to make generalized implications or interpretations of what this research means as it only covered three companies. That kind of generalization does not fit the spirit of qualitative research either. The research, though, does bring forth the fact that the three companies that were interviewed do have sophisticated business and product strategies in place, which they are actively utilizing, and especially in the case of company three, they are willing to adapt to the new market conditions extremely fast which surprised even the writer of this thesis.

What would be the next step in this field? The writer of this thesis suggests looking into two areas:

1. What strategic components are companies lacking? – This would offer a great extension to the created foundation of understanding how deep mobile gaming companies' strategies are. The next logical step from a writer's point of view would be to find what they do not possess.
2. Evaluating companies' strategies – As this research takes no part in evaluating companies' strategies, taking a more judgmental and critical approach to the strategies would find fruitful findings, which would further enrich the field of mobile gaming development and strategic academic literature.

The writing and research process has given the writer of this thesis new perspectives to the inner workings of mobile gaming companies. The writer of this thesis will surely use in the working life when dealing and discussing with mobile gaming companies in the near and far future.

The writer of the thesis will sleep his nights well knowing that however market conditions change, user expectations evolve, or competition gets tighter, Finnish mobile gaming developers are ready to adapt and look into themselves to survive, thrive, and level up user expectations.

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Thesis material management plan

1. General description of the material - ✓

Research materials are collected through interviewing three mobile gaming companies in Finland. The interview answers were collected to a survey and all interviews were recorded except one. The exception was due to person being afraid of her voice being accessible for AI models.

2. Documentation and quality of the material - ✓

Informants are named after their job titles in the interview forms. Participated companies are referred as Company One, Company Two and Company Three. Only the researcher knows the identity of the interviewees behind the job title and the real name of the participated companies. Participated companies are not aware of each other as throughout the interview process they are informed that there are other participants but companies are always named by their assigned number identification. Participants anonymity is designed and conducted around American Psychologist Associations, European University Institute's and other academic sources best practices and requirements.

3. Storage and backup - ✓

Interview answers are stored in two places:
Online forms – The answers interviewees gave during the interview.
Researchers USB hard-drive – Interview recordings and transcripts.
To protect the anonymity of the interviewees and participated companies, the interview records are kept in offline storage all the time. Neither the online forms with answers are shared with anyone.

4. Ethical and legal issues related to storage - ✓

This topic was discussed with the interviewees and participating companies. To protect the identity of the companies and their potential trade secrets, interview forms are kept online and interview recordings on researcher's offline computer. Interviewees were informed in various stages of the interview process, that the interview recordings will never be released

or held on an online service. Storage of data is designed around European University Institute's code of ethical conduct.

5. Opening the material and long-term storage

Interviewed companies and interviewees were promised anonymity, which was also Company Ones and Company Threes term to participate, without disclosure time thus the researcher holds the material and will not make them public. For long-term storage, interview recordings will be transferred to USB-stick after the completion of the thesis. Interview forms will stay online. Interview forms, due to their structure will include only company and interviewee pseudonyms.

Appendixes

Appendix 1 – Business & product strategy reduction & clustering

Reduction of answers regarding business strategy to their classes

Original statement	Reduction
2. Teams are given autonomy for independent execution of products without company restrictions.	Autonomous teams and organizational structure
9. Qualitatively, we gather feedback from employees and players to assess performance.	Communicating performance
11. Clear objectives facilitate effective communication with stakeholders.	
16. Learn and grow activities include prototype development, staying updated on industry changes, and playing competitors' games.	
18. Market research is encouraged, allowing employees to learn from other games and avoid similar mistakes.	
19. Learn & grow sessions involve playing competitors' games, identifying improvements, and learning from them.	Continuous learning and adaptation
8. We are yet to launch products with new multiplayer tech, and adjustments will be based on market behavior.	
20. Innovation is key; we aim to create products that don't exist in the market for sustained success.	
21. Our quest is always to create highly innovative products, introducing new features, systems, or reimagining existing cores.	
39. The company shifted focus from retention metrics to experimenting with new price points using Google's AB testing tool.	Customer testing
41. Employee input shaped the strategy, leading to a shift towards making competitive multiplayer games.	Employee input
9. Our "two dreams days" encourage creative problem-solving related to our live game.	Encouraging innovation and creativity

10. Everyone is encouraged to think innovatively about gameplay and in-game content.

5. Despite ups and downs, we've explored different implementations and learned from them.

6. CEO handles that issue.

9. Decisions and tools are in progress, aligning with our strategic goals.

6. Profitability is fundamental for any gaming studio; success is unlikely without it.

14. Monetary success is a key factor in evaluating strategy success.

12. The main objective is to launch a profitable game, a fundamental goal.

13. Decision-making involves aligning with profitability for success.

14. Profitability is the yardstick for measuring strategy effectiveness.

40. The long-term vision involves achieving positive Return on Ad Spend (ROAS) and proving our capabilities to investors.

44. The company aims to be a financially successful game studio, setting trends in mobile-first multiplayer games.

45. The long-term vision includes financial success and cultivating values for employee appreciation and commitment.

47. The long-term vision is clear, emphasizing financial success, employee culture, and strategic avenues.

48. From an employee perspective, the long-term vision is to avoid bankruptcy.

43. Our goal for 2024 is to launch one profitable game, showcasing our skills and team capabilities, with expectations of significant progress the following year.

1. We focus on the mobile platform, specifically in the shooter genre, identifying strengths in that market.

Exploration, learning and management involvement

Financial goals

Financial metrics

Financial success

Focus on specific market segment

3. Our company creates enjoyable mid-core shooter games with a team-based organizational structure.

5. The business strategy revolves around maintaining a high-quality live product and making competitive multiplayer games.

6. The overall company strategy centers on creating competitive multiplayer games.

4. We understand player motivations, emphasizing social multiplayer arcade mayhem in our game portfolio.

1. Key points involve defining our position in multiplayer hybrid casual gaming, focusing on clear market positioning.

2. We aim to innovate in PvP communication and human-to-human interaction, avoiding direct competition with major players.

15. Combined with our unique tech capabilities.

16. Our unique capabilities enable ideation and innovation.

17. Imaginative design and existing tech form the basis of our US-based products.

42. Newer projects adapt to changes in the target market even before launch.

19. The company faces challenges in adapting to ongoing trends due to team size and scope.

20. Adapting to trends is challenging, and the company struggles to jump on them in a timely manner.

33. The decision to move to hybrid casual gaming started when it emerged as a trend.

36. In-app purchase products require strategic positioning in a competitive market.

37. Launching four games with hopes for scalability, intending to generate revenue for further investment.

38. Recognizing the surge in hybrid casual gaming, we decided to focus on virality and organic growth alongside user acquisition.

Leveraging unique tech capabilities

Market adaptation

41. The ultimate goal is to become a widely enjoyed hobby for millions of people.

Market recognition

42. We aspire to be the best in hybrid casual gaming by the year 2025.

3. Essential elements include visual concepts for virality and maintaining a long-term presence across multiple platforms.

5. Multiplayer is crucial for pulling in users, a key part of our strategy.

Market requirements

7. Taking time to assess the market for unique implementations is essential.

10. User acquisition is challenging but vital, with ongoing evaluation.

1. Currently, we balance ad and in-app purchase monetization effectively.

Monetization strategy

2. We've introduced more in-app purchase features, achieving a well-balanced approach.

3. The business strategy is to create a portfolio of live-operated mobile, free-to-play games with a focus on social multiplayer arcade mayhem.

32. Target audiences vary slightly for different shooter products.

33. Trends are monitored as the target audience may change over time.

Monitoring & adapting target audience

37. The target audience is clear, and products adapt to changes in the world and audience behavior.

30. Our strategy aims to reach an audience not yet targeted by other gaming studios.

New distribution networks

38. Business strategy involves exploring cross-platform opportunities.

Orientation to the market

4. Despite fierce competition, our strategy aligns to compete effectively, especially as a smaller player.

4. We prioritize a committed and appreciative culture, placing people as the highest priority.

People centric culture

11. For products that attract external investor interest, various milestones are considered.

12. Depending on success metrics, we decide whether to continue or shelve a product.

13. We may pitch a set of defined products or develop internal products.

50. Products are evaluated precisely, considering risks, time, and technical aspects.

51. The current strategy involves creating multiple projects and evaluating them meticulously for various factors.

22. We have a clearer vision for our franchise and associated projects.

23. The long-term vision aims to create widely recognized games.

24. The portfolio strategy is identified as one way to achieve our goal of making well-known games.

25. The current business strategy emphasizes the portfolio approach to reach our goal.

49. The current strategy focuses on creating multiple projects to produce content and products.

21. The refined business strategy focuses on specific types of games within our portfolio.

34. We prioritize human-to-human interaction while simultaneously focusing on multiplayer aspects in our gaming approach.

39. After strategic planning and realignment, we are determined to make our chosen approach successful.

7. Company objectives are assessed annually or quarterly to check business performance.

8. We track product and business metrics quantitatively, focusing on key performance indicators.

10. Different milestones are established to measure progress.

Product specific success metrics

Product success metrics

Product variety

Regular objective & KPI assessment

7. Regular evaluations of game milestones, financials, and timelines guide our strategic decisions.	
8. Achieving timelines, including Return on Ad Spend (ROAS) and profitability, is a key focus.	
40. A clearer evaluation of business risks and opportunities emerged, influencing strategy and articulation.	Risk & opportunities evaluation
46. Strategic goals involve avenues like self-publishing, external investment, or acquisition.	Self-publishing, investments & acquisitions
43. The company has short- and long-term goals, with a vision of becoming a significant player in the shooter market.	Short- and long-term goals with vision
29. The target audience is primarily male, but efforts are made to diversify.	
30. The main target audience includes males aged 18 to 35 who enjoy mid-core shooter games.	Specific demographic definition
31. The target audience broadly includes males aged 18 to 35 who enjoy shooter games like Call of Duty.	
17. We have a rough idea of our player demographics, influencing our feature development.	Specific demographic definition
28. Our strategy targets well-defined age and gender segments with specific game preferences.	
29. We identify the types of games players want to play and their preferences within our defined age and gender segments.	Specific demographic definition
31. We target the age group of 24 to 40-45 in our strategy.	
32. While we avoid gender bias, some games may slightly cater to a male audience based on our portfolio.	Specific demographic definition
34. Learnings from a young target audience help understand behavior, interests, and retention strategies.	
35. Evolving customer behaviors are studied for existing products and adapted offerings.	Specific motivation target audience
18. A portfolio strategy is essential to cater to various player motivations and target audiences.	

<p>36. Pitch decks include demographic data, interests, and market opportunities for effective decision-making.</p>	<p>specific motivation, market and demographic audience</p>
<p>28. The focus is on a specific genre, particularly shooter games, targeting a specific market.</p>	
<p>15. Research and competitive analysis guide new product setups to avoid similarities with existing games.</p>	<p>Specific target market definition</p>
<p>17. Evaluation of products shifted from a tech-focused approach to innovation-based criteria.</p>	
<p>20. A few years ago, the strategic focus shifted to shooter games, enhancing team understanding and development.</p>	
<p>18. Identifying underserved trends and needs guides our strategic direction.</p>	
<p>19. We prioritize avoiding replication of what others are doing.</p>	<p>Strategic market positioning</p>
<p>22. The key criteria for our innovations are uniqueness and appeal; we aim to bring both innovation and acceptance in each space.</p>	
<p>35. Loose in-app purchases are essential, providing a small margin for profitable transactions.</p>	<p>Strategic monetization adaptation</p>
<p>12. While leveraging our existing product for promotion, the competitive advantage comes from understanding player motivation.</p>	
<p>In terms of user acquisition, we prioritize community management alongside traditional channels to build an organic, viral community, differentiating us from big-spending studios.</p>	<p>Understanding the audience</p>
<p>11. Our unique product doesn't follow the same rules as others in the market, given our organic user base.</p>	<p>Unique product</p>

Clustering of answers regarding business strategy to their classes

Reductions	Classes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Autonomous teams and organizational structure 2. Communicating performance 3. Continuous learning and adaptation 4. Customer testing 5. Employee input 	<p>BUSINESS STRATEGY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Market segment focus 1. Organizational structure

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Encouraging innovation and creativity 7. Exploration, learning and management involvement 8. Financial goals 9. Financial metrics 10. Financial success 11. Focus on specific market segment 12. Leveraging unique tech capabilities 13. Market adaptation 14. Market recognition 15. Market requirements 16. Monetization strategy 17. Monitoring & adapting target audience 18. New distribution networks 19. Orientation to the market 20. People centric culture 21. Product specific success metrics 22. Product success metrics 23. Product variety 24. Refined focus 25. Regular objective & KPI assessment 26. Risk & opportunities evaluation 27. Self-publishing, investments & acquisitions 28. Short- and long-term goals with vision 29. Specific demographic definition 30. Specific motivation target audience 31. specific motivation, market and demographic audience 32. Specific target market definition 33. Strategic market positioning 34. Strategic monetization adaptation 35. Understanding the audience 36. Unique product 	<p>and culture</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 20. Organizational structure and culture 16. Monetization strategy 15. Market and financial goals 19. Market and financial goals 10. Market and financial goals 33. Strategic market positioning and adaptation 3. Strategic market positioning and adaptation 14. Strategic initiatives for long-term vision 23. Strategic initiatives for long-term vision 22. Strategic initiatives for long-term vision <p>PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND METRICS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 25. Regular evaluation 2. Performance communication and product metrics 21. Performance communication and product metrics 8. Financial and market assessment 7. Financial and market assessment 15. Financial and market assessment 9. Financial success and metrics 10. Financial success and metrics
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	<p>27. Financial success and metrics</p> <p>INNOVATION AND TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES</p> <p>6. Innovation and creativity encouragement</p> <p>36. Unique product and tech capabilities</p> <p>35. Unique product and tech capabilities</p> <p>12. Unique product and tech capabilities</p> <p>MARKET DEVELOPMENT MONITORING AND DATA</p> <p>32. Target market definition</p> <p>17. Audience monitoring and adaptation</p> <p>30. Audience monitoring and adaptation</p> <p>31. Audience monitoring and adaptation</p> <p>29. Audience monitoring and adaptation</p> <p>18. Market trend adaptation strategy</p> <p>4. Market trend adaptation strategy</p> <p>26. Market trend adaptation strategy</p> <p>5. Market trend adaptation strategy</p> <p>13. Market trend adaptation</p>
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	<p>strategy</p> <p>28. Market trend adaptation strategy</p> <p>24. Focus refinement and monetization adaptation</p> <p>34. Focus refinement and monetization adaptation</p>
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Reduction of answers regarding product strategy to their classes

Original statement	Reduction
<p>34. Various research, including user types and Google Analytics, informs product adjustments.</p> <p>25. Customer insights from game analytics are crucial for decision-making.</p> <p>26. Marketing tools like data AI and third-party services aid customer insights.</p> <p>17. Utilizing tools like Sensor Tower and Game Refinery, attending events, and collecting insights drive our market understanding.</p>	<p>Analytics tools</p>
<p>4. Our recent product strategy aims to surpass Standoff 2 as the market leader in tactical shooter games.</p>	<p>Being the market leader</p>
<p>1. Our goal in the multiplayer arcade category is to be the best.</p>	
<p>10. Evaluating progress is challenging in early production stages with new tech and game segments.</p>	<p>Challenges in evaluation progress in early stages</p>

18. Clarification of the product strategy aids execution by providing a clearer path to objectives.

Clarity of execution path

15. Learning about player preferences contributes to resource prioritization.

42. Clear vision prompts roadmap revisions for better alignment.

29. Our road map is based on the product gating system, aiming to be the best in our chosen niche.

30. Product gating, aligned timelines, and milestones guide our team toward launching profitable hybrid casual games.

Clear goals and objectives included

31. Clear goals and KPI gates are set, measuring game depth, engagement, and other meaningful metrics.

32. Pushing games to relevant testing stages, ensuring meaningful KPIs are measured for accurate data.

24. Community building and virality are crucial aspects of our strategy, facilitated by proprietary tech.

Community building & virality through tech

19. Adapting to ongoing trends is challenging due to the company's size.

Company size challenges adaptation

38. Our unique value proposition involves creativity without brand restrictions.

Creative freedom

39. Creative freedom allows us to explore unique and entertaining features.

30. Dedicated individuals identify market trends and create prototypes for new opportunities.

Dedicated market research

11. Team goals are communicated to foster involvement and preparation for upcoming challenges.

Defining goals & expectations

12. Team leads are responsible for tracking and updating the team on the status of goals.

15. Defining key points per product, including market opportunity, growth hacking, game overview, plan, innovation, UI & UX, tech, and monetization, helps set clear expectations.

16. Goals are monitored for every team, ensuring progress toward objectives.

6. Clear production points are communicated regularly due to our small team.

5. We set clear timelines for each month and quarter, tracking progress closely and communicating goals to the entire team.

6. Regularly following and communicating clear timelines for every milestone, game, and financial prospect, especially focusing on ROAS and profitability.

7. Initial focus is on testing engagement, refining game concepts based on key metrics, and ensuring a profitable product.

8. For game concepts lacking essential elements, we reconsider and test, requiring key metrics to instill trust and further investment.

9. Implementing a product gating system ensures clarity and agreement on key aspects of game development.

11. Product strategy directly aligns with and contributes to game success.

12. All actions must align with the business strategy to avoid secondary issues.

38. Without a product strategy, the game's design choices would lack direction.

39. Ownership is emphasized, defining the sandbox within which the team operates.

Direct alignment and contribution to game success

Direction, purpose & ownership

<p>40. Business sense defines the sandbox, restricting creative choices.</p>	
<p>64. The company is driven by business metrics, emphasizing the need to meet specific goals.</p>	
<p>40. Achieving a positive return on ad spend is a crucial milestone for our long-term vision.</p>	<p>Emphasis on business metrics & goals</p>
<p>36. Emphasis is placed on testing frequently and imposing restrictions on development.</p>	
<p>37. Testing ensures that development choices make sense.</p>	<p>Emphasis on testing</p>
<p>17. Long-term projects evolve based on product strategy.</p>	<p>Evaluation of long-term projects</p>
<p>53. Liveops involve ongoing maintenance with a roadmap, while new games have expectations for time, monetization, and release.</p>	<p>Expectations and ongoing maintenance</p>
<p>14. Objectives related to human resources and expertise improvement are also set and communicated during meetings and on Confluence.</p>	<p>Expertise improvement objectives</p>
<p>21. The strategy provides focus, helping filter out irrelevant matters.</p>	
<p>11. Building a sandbox for games to thrive in the market is essential for success and aligns with our core objectives.</p>	<p>Focus and filtering out irrelevant matters</p>
<p>12. Core success relies on creating parameters for game survival in the market, with the product gating providing clarity.</p>	
<p>33. Real data is crucial, focusing on return of ad spend as a key metric.</p>	<p>Focus on real data and metrics</p>
<p>2. We're focusing on online multiplayer in mobile games, aligning our product strategy with business objectives.</p>	<p>Genre strategy for financial ROI%</p>

<p>1. In our first strategy, we begin with simpler concepts, testing asynchronous ideas with good references, identifying our market space, and preparing tech for simultaneous multiplayer products.</p> <p>2. Our focus is on hybrid games for a fast return on ads, prioritizing LTV and player value, keeping it approachable to build an audience, and emphasizing community building and virality.</p>	
<p>3. Our product strategy centers on building multiplayer aspects into hybrid casual games exclusively.</p>	
<p>4. The product strategy shapes our daily thinking and business objectives, influencing how we build games once we label them as hybrid casual multiplayer.</p>	
<p>20. Implementation of one product strategy contributes indirectly to the success of other products.</p>	<p>Indirect contribution to success of other products</p>
<p>20. We're developing our multiplayer platform in-house, aiming for innovation and distinctive player experiences.</p>	
<p>21. Virality is a primary goal, achieved by building multiplayer games that support organic growth.</p>	<p>In-house technology for innovation</p>
<p>22. Learning from market insights, companies, and proven products is crucial for product innovation.</p>	
<p>23. Building a hybrid casual multiplayer game guides our choices, even in developing challenging in-house tech.</p>	
<p>17. Despite having a defined target market, initial users shaped our product.</p>	<p>Initial users shape the product</p>
<p>19. The sound report is crucial for setting expectations in concept and execution, aligning with the chosen product strategy.</p>	<p>Internal reports</p>
<p>10. It's an iterative process aligning with business strategy due to our small team.</p>	<p>Iterative process</p>
<p>65. While there are KPIs to evaluate success, alignment with the product strategy is not explicitly mentioned.</p>	<p>KPIs evaluated but no alignment</p>

<p>49. We have KPIs to measure success, directly linked to the contents we release.</p>	
<p>50. Regular meetings ensure that shipped content aligns with KPIs.</p>	<p>KPIs linked to released contents and regular meetings</p>
<p>40. Portfolio management is gaining importance in our product vision discussions.</p>	
<p>25. Our company size may limit a broad product portfolio, but our carefully managed gating systems drive success.</p>	
<p>27. Investing more resources in games with potential, guided by the product gating system.</p>	<p>Leveraging portfolio management</p>
<p>28. Carefully managing KPI gating systems, ensuring alignment with the road map and chosen products.</p>	
<p>2. Our business objectives for live operation games include reaching a specific number of actively playing players to achieve success.</p>	
<p>3. Our product expansion requirements align with our business objectives.</p>	<p>Live operations success</p>
<p>16. Adapting the live operations cycle to player segments is essential.</p>	<p>Liveoperations adaptation</p>
<p>18. Balancing original ideas with market insights, ensuring innovation and acceptance in each space.</p>	<p>Market insights weighted against innovation</p>
<p>5. The first step in our strategy is defining market opportunities to ensure alignment between product, business, and design.</p>	
<p>6. The second step involves agreement on how to capitalize on the identified market opportunities.</p>	<p>Market opportunity alignment in product</p>
<p>7. Details from this process are incorporated into a deck, enhancing our understanding of the game and informing the game overview.</p>	

<p>3. The product strategy centers on addressing player motivations for our audience.</p>	
<p>4. Our aim is to cater to player motivations within the framework of live-operated free-to-play games.</p>	
<p>5. The framework of modern live-operated free-to-play games guides our KPIs and benchmarks.</p>	
<p>18. Researching top-grossing games helps us understand market trends.</p>	
<p>16. Market research, analyzing campaign results, and using preference data inform our decisions.</p>	<p>Market research to inform decisions</p>
<p>13. After market research, our management team sets objectives, including KPI goals, discussed during company and team meetings.</p>	<p>Market research-driven objectives</p>
<p>7. Regular meetings outline our next six months and yearly plans.</p>	<p>Monitoring goals for every team</p>
<p>33. Market research covers PC, games, monetization, etc., to identify successful core/meta elements.</p>	<p>Multimedia to identify success</p>
<p>49. If there are guidelines, they aren't readily available to employees.</p>	
<p>50. No specific information provided.</p>	
<p>52. Barebone prototypes are created, and the company embraces the idea that "no idea is bad."</p>	<p>No clear guidelines</p>
<p>41. The vision includes having a portfolio of games, though guidelines are evolving.</p>	
<p>55. Discussions are ongoing about new product development and different products.</p>	<p>Ongoing discussions about new product development</p>

13. Player motivation targeting is a key focus for our product strategy.

Player motivation targeting

14. Validating the impact of player motivation targeting is challenging but crucial.

41. The strategy focuses on making player-centric features to keep users happy and engaged.

28. Feature design considers player motivations in the live operations field.

29. Monthly planning involves adapting to player motivation-driven approaches.

30. Player motivation-driven feature design is fundamental in live operations.

31. Aligning features with player motivations requires thorough checks.

Player-centric focus on feature development

32. A unique product has provided advantages in feature delivery.

33. Feature design undergoes a sanity check for player motivation alignment.

34. Fundamental feature design aligns with player motivations for the audience.

35. Building products catering to player motivations is a core approach.

32. Research involves playing competitors' games and noting their economies, features, and designs.

Playing competitors games

8. We closely follow the impact of changes on the game, adjusting updates to increase value per user and positively affect the business.

Product change for increased value

25. Product definition involves identifying market opportunities and ensuring the product can meet them.

Product definition based on market opportunities

27. Products are adjusted to cater more to the specific target market.

19. The product strategy aims for the success of the mobile game.

Product strategy aiming for success

23. The product strategy is updated based on the company's target market to determine the best approach.

Product strategy alignment with target market

15. The product strategy guides our decisions; if a feature doesn't align, we omit it, ensuring coherence.

8. Detailed profitability measures are communicated regularly, considering team size.

Profitability goals

9. Profitability is monitored regularly, with overall burn rate and product earnings communicated.

56. Prototyping teams create presentations, which, when turned into prototypes, are greenlit by management for development.

57. The first step involves creating a presentation for feedback and ideas from the company.

58. If the presentation turns into a prototype, management allocates resources for development.

Prototyping teams and greenlighting for development

59. The prototype is then treated like any other project, moving toward development.

60. Eventually, the project reaches the development stage.

10. For live games, our goal is to develop revenue.

Revenue development goals

43. We follow a long-term roadmap approach, revisiting it as needed.

44. Vision clarity is crucial for revisiting and refining the roadmap.

45. Past roadmap clarity issues led to frequent revisions.

46. We have a roadmap, but its alignment with product strategy varies.

47. The roadmap aligns with product strategy, both focusing on player motivations.

48. The roadmap is derived from and aligned with the product strategy.

34. Mapping tech, timelines, and milestones align with the road map and product results.

35. Our road map aligns with being the best in our chosen niche, focusing on hybrid casual games.

36. Aligning with the product gating system, we aim to launch a profitable game in 2024 and excel in 2025.

22. The company aims to achieve specific goals in targeted platforms and markets.

24. The strategy is to create mid-core shooters, aligned with the target audience.

20. Business strategy refinement focuses on a specific game genre.

13. Ideating concepts targeting the identified market segment aligns well with the growth manager's goals.

Roadmap specific alignment with product strategy

Specific goals in targeted platforms and markets

14. Knowing our target market is broad, allowing us to align our game concepts with the market situation.

36. The fun factor of our second game guides our product vision.

37. Leveraging an unfair advantage, our product adheres to player motivations.

26. Creating revenue and excitement, fueled by the main yardstick, the product gating system.

42. The goal is to ship certain types of games.

43. The aim is for players to feel unique and skilled, reaching milestones and enjoying a journey with constant content updates.

44. A sizable player base enables expansion to deliver new products.

45. Clarity is sought over the types of games the company can deliver.

46. The focus is on creating good competitive multiplayer games and providing a great experience to turn players into paying customers.

47. Every action for the product aims to keep users happy, engaged, and spending.

51. The prototyping team generates many prototypes and ideas for presentation to the company.

1. The product strategy focuses on mobile shooters, aiming to identify opportunities and create a polished user experience.

28. Team members track market trends and where the industry is heading.

Specific motivations gatered

Specific products offered to the market

Specific teams responsibility

Specific user experience

Team reponsibility to do market research

29. Game directors, team leads, and designers actively re-search successful and unsuccessful aspects of the market.

31. Monitoring the game industry includes tracking game launches, competitor actions, and industry changes.

48. A larger product portfolio is desired to achieve the company's objectives.

54. The team works in two-week sprints.

61. Success is measured using various KPIs, including DAU, revenue, retention, and more.

62. Internal analytics and third-party tools are used to measure KPIs such as ROI, ROAS, revenue, retention, DAU, MAU, ARPU, and ARPPU.

63. Various metrics, not considered KPIs, are measured during testing and evaluating marketing activities.

51. Monitoring various KPIs helps assess the overall success of our product.

37. We have exact measurements in place, setting goals and achieving results aligned with the product gating system.

38. Pushing the game to relevant testing of the KPIs ensures a fair measurement of success.

39. Obtaining real data is essential for accurate evaluation, emphasizing the significance of return on ad spend.

41. Metrics like playtime and retention are measured to gauge player engagement and satisfaction.

26. The focus is on understanding the users most likely to buy the product.

To meet company objectives

Two weeks sprint

Use of various KPIs for success measurement

User familiarization for profit

9. We have specific yearly objectives at the company level.	Yearly company level objectives
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Clustering of answers regarding product strategy to their classes

Reduction	Classes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analytics tools 2. Being the market leader 3. Challenges in evaluation progress in early stages 4. Clarity of execution path 5. Clear goals and objectives included 6. Community building & virality through tech 7. Company size challenges adaptation 8. Creative freedom 9. Dedicated market research 10. Defining goals & expectations 11. Direct alignment and contribution to game success 12. Direction, purpose & ownership 13. Emphasis on business metrics & goals 14. Emphasis on testing 15. Evaluation of long-term projects 16. Expectations and ongoing maintenance 17. Expertise improvement objectives 18. Focus and filtering out irrelevant matters 19. Focus on real data and metrics 20. Genre strategy for financial ROI% 21. Indirect contribution to success of other products 22. In-house technology for innovation 23. Initial users shape the product 24. Internal reports 25. Iterative process 26. KPIs evaluated but no alignment 27. KPIs linked to released contents and regular meetings 28. Leveraging portfolio management 29. Live operations success 30. Liveoperations adaptation 	<p>PRODUCT DEFINITION AND SHAPING</p> <p>54. User experience and live operations</p> <p>29. User experience and live operations</p> <p>44. Product strategy and success alignment</p> <p>21. Product strategy and success alignment</p> <p>11. Product strategy and success alignment</p> <p>18. Focus on filtering irrelevant matters</p> <p>50. Specific goals and alignment with target market</p> <p>45. Specific goals and alignment with target market</p> <p>43. Product definition and user familiaration</p> <p>59. Product definition and user familiaration</p> <p>23. Product definition and user familiaration</p> <p>14. Product shaping</p> <p>12. Product shaping</p> <p>22. Product shaping</p>

<p>31. Market insights weighted against innovation</p> <p>32. Market opportunity alignment in product</p> <p>33. Market research to inform decisions</p> <p>34. Market research-driven objectives</p> <p>35. Monitoring goals for every team</p> <p>36. Multimedia to identify success</p> <p>37. No clear guidelines</p> <p>38. Ongoing discussions about new product development</p> <p>39. Player motivation targeting</p> <p>40. Player-centric focus on feature development</p> <p>41. Playing competitors games</p> <p>42. Product change for increased value</p> <p>43. Product definition based on market opportunities</p> <p>44. Product strategy aiming for success</p> <p>45. Product strategy alignment with target market</p> <p>46. Profitability goals</p> <p>47. Prototyping teams and greenlighting for development</p> <p>48. Revenue development goals</p>	<p>40. Audience guiding</p> <p>52. Specific products and value propositions</p> <p>STRATEGY ALIGNMENT</p> <p>2. Market leadership and product alignment</p> <p>32. Market leadership and product alignment</p> <p>2. Market leadership and product alignment</p> <p>42. Financial strategy and genre focus</p> <p>20. Financial strategy and genre focus</p> <p>60. Company-level and revenue goals</p> <p>48. Company-level and revenue goals</p> <p>15. Evaluation and clarity in execution</p> <p>4. Evaluation and clarity in execution</p> <p>EXECUTION AND ADAPTATION</p> <p>10. Iterative process and goal definition</p> <p>25. Iterative process and goal definition</p> <p>35. Monitoring and profitability goals</p> <p>46. Monitoring and profitability goals</p> <p>33. Market research and adaptation</p>
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<p>49. Roadmap specific alignment with product strategy</p> <p>50. Specific goals in targeted platforms and markets</p> <p>51. Specific motivations gatered</p> <p>52. Specific products offered to the market</p> <p>53. Specific teams responsibility</p> <p>54. Specific user experience</p> <p>55. Team reponsibility to do market research</p> <p>56. To meet company objectives</p> <p>57. Two weeks sprint</p> <p>58. Use of various KPIs for success measurement</p> <p>59. User familiarization for profit</p> <p>60. Yearly company level objectives</p>	<p>7. Market research and adaptation</p> <p>55. Team responsibility and market research</p> <p>9. Dedicated approach to market research</p> <p>41. Dedicated approach to market research</p> <p>36. Dedicated approach to market research</p> <p>1. Dedicated approach to market research</p> <p>31. Balancing market insights and innovation</p> <p>24. Balancing market insights and innovation</p> <p>16. Approach to product development</p> <p>57. Approach to product development</p> <p>38. Approach to product development</p> <p>47. Approach to product development</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS</p> <p>39. Player motivation and live operations</p> <p>30. Player motivation and live operations</p> <p>3. Player motivation and live operations</p> <p>51. Motivations and creative freedom</p>
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	<p>8. Motivations and creative freedom</p> <p>28. Leveraging portfolio management and community building</p> <p>6. Leveraging portfolio management and community building</p> <p>56. Alignment with company goals and objectives</p> <p>5. Alignment with company goals and objectives</p> <p>37. Team responsibility and lack of clear guidelines</p> <p>53. Team responsibility and lack of clear guidelines</p> <p>49. Alignment with roadmap with product strategy and data</p> <p>19. Alignment with roadmap with product strategy and data</p> <p>58. Use of various KPIs</p> <p>13. Emphasis on business metrics and goals</p>
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Appendix 2 – Communication and strategy understanding among team members and managers reduction & clustering

Reduction of answers regarding strategy understanding among managers & team members

Simplified expression	Reduction
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<p>17. Developing it has been difficult, adapting to aspects that can be demonstrated within a timeline.</p> <p>19. Concrete example is building our own backend.</p> <p>21. Different checkpoints determine if a product is the best or just a concept.</p> <p>22. Sync-ups happen weekly and quarterly, ensuring alignment.</p> <p>35. Sometimes, clarification occurs after the first meeting.</p> <p>16. Gaps in understanding can occur, especially when the road map is not thoroughly discussed.</p> <p>5. It provides clarity for design decisions and adaptations within the company, especially for multiplayer PVP & PVE games.</p> <p>3. It significantly influences my daily tasks as the roadmap is based on the product strategy, guiding my actions.</p> <p>1. It's clear to everyone.</p> <p>2. I'm aligned with the guidelines they give me for work.</p> <p>23. From a product perspective, the business is clear about aiming for a new product with a specific timeframe.</p> <p>13. Communication principles and the size of the company need to be considered.</p> <p>38. Reactive communication is good, even though proactive communication is lacking.</p> <p>41. The strategy is direct, offering clarity but also room for maneuvering within the set sandbox.</p> <p>42. The company allows direct communication with the CEO for problem-solving and is perceived as open.</p> <p>15. Communication plays a key role in reaching a shared understanding.</p> <p>29. A company Wikipedia serves as a repository for information.</p> <p>34. Differences in understanding user segments and monetization for the target audience are recognized.</p>	<p>Adapting to demonstrate time-lines</p> <p>Building own backend</p> <p>Checkpoints and sync-ups</p> <p>Clarification process</p> <p>Clarity for decisions and roadmap alignment</p> <p>Clear business goals for new products</p> <p>Communication principles</p> <p>Communication style</p> <p>Communication to achieve shared understanding</p> <p>Company wikipedia as a repository</p> <p>Differences in understanding</p>
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36. Yes, there are differences, mainly related to the business model.

31. Understanding can be difficult if an objective is seen from a certain point of view.

1. They have a direct impact.

30. Any disconnect usually happens when the strategy isn't yet refined.

3. Concerns about aspects like monetization and content pipeline are discussed between business and product for improvement.

4. All strategies, especially those related to our target audience, apply to my work as I collaborate with social media managers.

3. We discuss it almost every day for clarity, staying aligned with the main business objective.

26. Material regularly finds its way to slide decks presented to the whole team.

8. In our small company, we strive for everyone to be on the same page to minimize information loss in communication.

15. They are very familiar, and weekly meetings ensure alignment throughout the team.

32. Team members are motivated and want to prove their understanding.

33. It's about exposure.

34. People need to understand and embrace the strategy.

25. Changes are discussed in a meeting hosted by the product team, starting from employees rather than management.

24. Extraordinary meetings are held for any changes or new announcements.

39. Product strategy is employed when determining how to evolve or proceed.

35. Management has never enforced anything on someone.

Difficulty from point of view

Direct impact

Disconnect from nonrefined strategy

Discussion and collaboration

Distribution of important material

Emphasis on team alignment

Employee motivation and engagement

Employee-initiated discussions

Extraordinary meetings

Flexibility in strategy implementation

4. Develop and publish games with human-to-human interaction as a foundational component, enabling virality through originality and unique tech.	Focus on human-to-human interaction and virality
8. Our company creates mid-core shooter games designed for both casual and competitive play.	Focus on mid-core shooter games
6. The focus is on developing mobile-first shooter games and considering cross-platform options as part of the product strategy.	
6. Core business is to build mobile-first games that are marketable with the potential for larger LTV, focusing on ads and in-app purchases.	Focus on mobile-first products
9. We specialize in real-time multiplayer games available across various platforms.	Focus on multiplayer games across platforms
15. The new product takes precedence.	Focus on new product launch
11. At this stage, it's about creating a product that brings revenue and excites the user.	
7. The business strategy involves self-publishing shooter games to reach a large audience.	Focus on self-publishing mobile products
5. Aim to be a self-publishing hybrid casual company, creating all the player games.	
10. Our business involves selling virtual goods and experiences, achieved by providing experiences that enhance through virtual goods.	Focus on selling virtual goods
18. Gating criteria, like needing a profitable game, means it must have a good ROAS.	Gating criteria and ROAS
9. Goal is to have at least one title scalable to a global launch.	Global launch and revenue ranking
10. Aim to reach the top 250 in revenue in its segment.	
32. It's described as great.	Great & open communication
33. Communication is very open.	
24. Defined ground rules make it easy to create new product decks in response to market opportunities.	Ground rules and new products
1. It guides my decision-making for launching new products and forming teams.	Guidance in decision-making
2. Both impact my work; I focus on acquiring new players and scaling our products profitably.	

21. Identifying market opportunities allows us to develop ideas and translate them into new products.	Identifying market opportunities
13. Communication is better now, but it wasn't always successful in the past.	Improved communication
18. Although not perfect, the strategy has significantly improved.	Improvement over time
37. Not all employees might know or understand the business and product strategy if it doesn't affect them directly.	Limited awareness of strategies
40. Top management is supportive of understanding and implementing strategies.	Management support
18. There is ample support, but it is limited by financial realities and company resources.	Management support
19. Support for implementing strategies is constrained by financial and resource limitations.	Management support
16. Metrics focus on customer retention, monetization, and satisfaction.	Metrics for customer retention, monetization and satisfaction
11. Our strategy is to create engaging gaming experiences for multiplayer gaming enthusiasts.	Metrics for customer retention, monetization and satisfaction
4. We stick to player motivations learned from the past, aiming to create games that resonate with our player base.	Motivations driven approach
5. Creating a live-operated, free-to-play game tailored to player motivations is our focus, aligning with the company's overall objectives.	Motivations driven approach
6. Team members, although we're small, wear multiple hats.	Motivations driven approach
6. Team members, although we're small, wear multiple hats.	Multifunctional roles in small teams
17. I haven't encountered conflicts arising from different perspectives or goals in product development.	Multifunctional roles in small teams
29. No disconnect among managers.	No disconnect
30. Emphasis on strategy or vision is present but not always communicated directly.	No disconnect
26. None.	Nondirect emphasis on strategy communication
19. Open floor discussions make the team familiar with various aspects, fostering ongoing conversations.	None
	Open floor discussion

<p>13. Every business's goal is positive ROI.</p>	<p>Positive ROI and stabilization</p>
<p>14. Stabilizing with another product is a priority. 27. Practices include planning sessions, task tracking, documentation, regular meetings, feedback sessions, and data sharing. 28. Practices arise from discussions of ideas, leading to clear discussions about industry happenings, ideas, and product decks. 12. The goals include maintaining profitable live games, releasing new shooter games, and dominating the market for a larger share.</p>	<p>Practises for alignment</p> <p>Profitability and market dominance</p>
<p>12. Profitability and scalability are the most important. 7. Aim to launch a profitable hybrid casual game, specifically in the multiplayer genre.</p>	<p>Profitable product</p>
<p>23. Quarterly day reviews the long-term vision and the previous three months. 17. Upper management rates familiarity with the strategy at a six on a scale of 1-10.</p>	<p>Quarterly reviews</p> <p>Rating familiarity</p>
<p>14. Communication is somewhat regular and consistent throughout the entire company. 25. CEO emphasizes open communication and keeping everyone up to date.</p>	<p>Regular & consistent communication</p>
<p>20. Weekly, monthly, and quarterly checkups ensure everyone is aligned.</p>	<p>Regular checkups for alignment</p>
<p>28. Reiterations ensure everyone remains aligned. 8. Define success in terms of revenue and goals to achieve once the game is launched.</p>	<p>Reiteration for alignment</p> <p>Revenue goals and success meters</p>
<p>11. For major updates, we have separate meetings with the entire company to share and discuss understanding. 12. There might be company meetings to communicate information, but practices to ensure alignment are not very strong.</p>	<p>Separate meetings with the company</p>
<p>22. Strategy discussions and goal brainstorming lead to tasks delegated to team members.</p>	<p>Strategy discussions</p>
<p>31. The communication is considered sufficient.</p>	<p>Sufficient communication</p>

<p>27. Communication is transparent and effective.</p> <p>20. Managers are familiar, but regular employees may not be unless they show interest.</p> <p>7. Some team members, especially those working on specific project parts, might not always be fully aware of the evolving game vision.</p> <p>7. Some team members, especially those working on specific project parts, might not always be fully aware of the evolving game vision.</p> <p>9. We update everyone weekly with demos to keep everyone informed.</p> <p>10. We have a weekly meeting to discuss important findings and road map changes.</p>	<p>Transparent & effective communication</p> <p>Varied levels of familiarity</p> <p>Weekly meetings</p>
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Clustering of answers regarding strategy understanding among managers & team members to their classes

Reduction	Classes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adapting to demonstrate timelines 2. Building own backend 3. Checkpoints and sync-ups 4. Clarification process 5. Clarity for decisions and roadmap alignment 6. Clear business goals for new products 7. Communication principles 8. Communication style 9. Communication to achieve shared understanding 10. Company wikipedia as a repository 11. Differences in understanding 12. Difficulty from point of view 13. Direct impact 14. Disconnect from nonrefined strategy 15. Discussion and collaboration 16. Distribution of important material 17. Emphasis on team alignment 18. Employee motivation and engagement 19. Employee-initiated discussions 20. Extraordinary meetings 21. Flexibility in strategy implementation 	<p>COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS</p> <p>33. Communication Channels</p> <p>15. Communication channels</p> <p>5. Clarity & Direct impact</p> <p>13. Clarity & direct impact</p> <p>7. Communication principles</p> <p>61. Regular communication practises</p> <p>56. Regular communication practises</p> <p>16. Transparency and effectiveness</p> <p>59. Transparency and effectiveness</p> <p>53. Transparency and effectiveness</p> <p>STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT AND AWARENESS</p> <p>24. Strategic focus areas</p> <p>27. Strategic focus areas</p>

22. Focus on human-to-human interaction and virality	23. Strategic focus areas
23. Focus on mid-core shooter games	25. Strategic focus areas
24. Focus on mobile-first products	28. Strategic focus areas
25. Focus on multiplayer games across platforms	40. Strategic focus areas
26. Focus on new product launch	22. Strategic focus areas
27. Focus on self-publishing mobile products	48. Strategic focus areas
28. Focus on selling virtual goods	46. Strategic focus areas
29. Gating criteria and ROAS	51. Overall familiarity
30. Global launch and revenue ranking	36. Overall familiarity
31. Great & open communication	45. Overall familiarity
32. Ground rules and new products	60. Overall familiarity
33. Guidance in decision-making	41. Team dynamics and alignment
34. Identifying market opportunities	17. Team dynamics and alignment
35. Improved communication	34. Market and strategy identification
36. Improvement over time	57. Market and strategy identification
37. Limited awareness of strategies	44. Alignment and information repository
38. Management support	47. Alignment and information repository
39. Metrics for customer retention, monetization and satisfaction	10. Alignment and information repository
40. Motivations driven approach	3. Alignment and information repository
41. Multifunctional roles in small teams	43. Emphasis on strategy communication
42. No disconnect	58. Emphasis on strategy communication
43. Nondirect emphasis on strategy communication	31. Emphasis on strategy communication
44. None	35. Communication improvement and consistency
45. Open floor discussion	52. Communication improvement and consistency
46. Positive ROI and stabilization	11. Understanding differences and clarification
47. Practises for alignment	
48. Profitability and market dominance	
49. Profitable product	
50. Quarterly reviews	
51. Rating familiarity	
52. Regular & consistent communication	
53. Regular checkups for alignment	
54. Reiteration for alignment	
55. Revenue goals and success meters	
56. Separate meetings with the company	
57. Strategy discussions	
58. Sufficient communication	
59. Transparent & effective communication	
60. Varied levels of familiarity	
61. Weekly meetings	

	<p>4. Understanding differences and clarification</p> <p>37. Awareness and communication</p> <p>9. Awareness and communication</p> <p>4. Understanding differences and clarification</p> <p>42. Alignment challenges</p> <p>14. Alignment challenges</p> <p>12. Alignment challenges</p> <p>8. Leadership style</p> <p>IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT</p> <p>49. Business performance and success metrics</p> <p>55. Business performance and success metrics</p> <p>26. Product launch and performance</p> <p>39. Product launch and performance</p> <p>30. Product launch and performance</p> <p>6. Product development and launch</p> <p>32. Product development and launch</p> <p>19. Product development and launch</p> <p>1. Product development and launch</p> <p>29. Execution and evaluation</p> <p>2. Execution and evaluation</p> <p>53. Execution and evaluation</p> <p>21. Strategy implementation support</p> <p>38. Strategy implementation support</p> <p>18. Employee engagement</p>
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Reduction of answers regarding strategies influence to decision making

Simplified expression	Reduction
11. While we have creative freedom, the product must align with our defined strategy and target segment.	Alignment with creative freedom
24. Company strategies play a crucial role in prioritizing features, allocating resources, and setting timelines.	Alignment with strategy
2. It's crucial to know the expected outcome of changes to ensure clarity on their impact.	
3. The roadmap is designed to address player motivations, aligning with the product strategy.	
1. In that sense, we need to anticipate.	Anticipation and adaptation
2. Adapt the product to reflect budget, financials, and technological capabilities, while monitoring market development.	
32. People may take time to focus on new goals if they are buried in their routines.	Challenges in implementing new goals
18. Clarity in strategy provides direction, outlining strengths, desired business areas, and long-term goals.	Clarity in strategy
30. There are cases like these, but details cannot be shared.	Confidentiality
26. Staying within strategies guides product managers and developers in adding features and games.	
15. The roadmap's derivation from the product strategy significantly influences day-to-day tasks.	Defining role of strategy
18. It defines almost everything.	
19. It should be the gatekeeper for anything.	
20. Design should address all use cases, considering how technology can complement it.	Design and technology integration
15. Documentation and cross-team communication enhance clarity on a company level.	
17. Weekly company-wide meetings foster open communication and a transparent atmosphere.	Documentation and communication for clarity
10. Keeping everyone informed about the product's direction is crucial for shared understanding.	
12. It's about checkpoints.	
16. Expose the idea to the company.	Exposure and product gating

17. Product gating ensures everyone is on the same page.	
18. External business factors may necessitate adjustments in approaching current production.	External factors
19. Decisions can deviate due to the practicalities of running a business and ensuring sustainability.	
12. External business factors may influence decisions, requiring adjustments to production.	External influence
19. Effective communication, documentation, cross-functional collaboration, defined responsibilities, accountability, monitoring, feedback, risk management, training, and leadership support are crucial.	
14. Frequent evaluation of games in production ensures alignment with objectives and overall strategy.	
16. Clear metrics, including playtime, PU% conversion, and matches played per day, align feature and game initiatives.	Factors for successful implementation
8. Roadmap formulation involves team discussions before specific plans are executed.	
9. Roadmap planning meetings are regular sessions where teams propose future plans.	
13. Sync-ups and pitching sessions help address concerns and gather opinions from different perspectives.	
21. We decided to create an asynchronous multiplayer game.	Game concept & tech focus
22. A SWOT analysis and suggestions emphasized the importance of solid tech for the team.	
29. Overhauling some meta-game aspects was a decision made to enhance our game.	Game enhancement and meta-game aspects
25. Big metrics, such as retention targets, guide the focus and linkage of features/games.	guidance by metrics
20. Product gating and KPIs guide feature selection at each stage.	Guidance on budgeting
7. Strategies guide budgeting decisions, indicating where resources should be allocated for optimal outcomes.	Impact on decision-making
3. Strategies impact decisions on user acquisition, budget allocation, campaign planning, and targeting.	Impact on external factors
4. Awareness of changes in strategies helps us understand their effects on product development.	
13. Decision deviations occur due to the realities of running a business and meeting goals.	
14. Changes in business goals or external factors can suddenly impact current and future plans.	
5. Themes like these significantly influence how we approach and execute our work.	Influence on work approach

<p>1. Strategies directly impact what we can do because features need clear goals to be effective.</p> <p>11. KPIs such as ROI, ROAS, revenue, retention, DAU, MAU, ARPU, and ARPPU are among our measurements.</p> <p>12. Every feature in the live product undergoes intensive measurement.</p> <p>13. Metrics and indicators exist for new projects but might not be present in our team.</p> <p>6. Improving user retention is a current focus, reflecting a key metric.</p> <p>7. Financial metrics are clear, but validating product strategy-related aspects can be challenging.</p> <p>8. We have KPI values but need to see how our first products with new tech and market segment perform before making adjustments.</p> <p>9. Metrics, especially user-related, are crucial for measuring success.</p>	<p>Key performance indicators for measurement</p>
<p>10. Prioritize ROAS and revenue goals.</p> <p>23. Designing features for a specific market foothold allows us to expand the audience through new product development.</p> <p>28. Restarting tROAS campaigns aligns with recent strategies, focusing on improved monetization results.</p> <p>23. We decided to push live an idle game concept from an outsourced developer while focusing on our actual strategy.</p> <p>24. Misalignment, unclear communication, or factors beyond control may cause issues.</p>	<p>Market expansion and audience focus</p> <p>Marketing and monetization strategies</p> <p>Outsourced development and misalignment issues</p>
<p>5. We use outsourcing for temporary scaling up when needed.</p> <p>16. In live operations, the objective is to enhance strategies over time, aligning with player motivations.</p> <p>17. Design decisions for features directly consider how they address player motivations.</p> <p>6. For me, particularly in production, expanding the product portfolio influences team expansion.</p>	<p>Outsourcing for temporary scaling</p> <p>Player motivations and live operations</p> <p>Portfolio expansion and team size</p>
<p>21. Weekly updates ensure our new project aligns with our strategy, encouraging open discussions.</p> <p>22. Open communication and participation allow anyone to address concerns without issues.</p> <p>8. Allocating risk by time and budget to new games is a part of strategy, considering its impact on existing products.</p> <p>5. The company allocates resources and bandwidth based on what it can afford.</p>	<p>Regular updates and open communication</p> <p>Risk allocation on product</p>

<p>6. Resourcing comes after creating the product, adjusting based on execution capabilities.</p> <p>4. The Return on Investment (ROI) approach guides decisions by considering future benefits and KPIs.</p> <p>7. Focus on ROAS and revenue.</p> <p>3. It should be part of the routine.</p> <p>4. That's how we manage ROAS and revenue goals.</p> <p>31. Product decisions, influenced by business and product strategy, led the game in a direction to reach a wider audience.</p> <p>1. Objectives guide daily decision-making and serve as reminders based on the strategies we want to employ.</p> <p>2. Strategies become objectives, guiding actions towards their achievement.</p> <p>9. Team leaders handle resource allocation, addressing needs for more resources within a team.</p> <p>27. Establishing two small game development teams was a recent decision to align with company strategies.</p> <p>14. Testing hypotheses with a live audience before the first test is essential.</p> <p>15. The kick-off is crucial.</p> <p>10. Timeliness is a crucial aspect of the strategy.</p> <p>11. Success in implementing products is uncertain without knowing contributing factors.</p> <p>33. Changes have occurred due to unclear sandboxes.</p> <p>34. Conscious decisions to deviate from established tracks were made without full awareness of the resulting changes.</p>	<p>ROI approach</p> <p>Routine integration</p> <p>Strategic impact decision impacting wider audience</p> <p>Strategies as objectives</p> <p>Team leaders and resource allocation</p> <p>Team structure and development</p> <p>Testing and kick-off</p> <p>Timelines as a crucial aspect</p> <p>Uncertainty of successful implementation</p> <p>Unclear sandboxes and conscious deviation</p>
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Clustering of answers regarding strategies influence to decision making to their classes

Reduction	Categories
<p>1.Alignment with creative freedom(cases 1)</p> <p>2.Alignment with strategy(1)</p> <p>3.Anticipation and adaptation(1)</p> <p>4.Challenges in implementing new goals(1)</p> <p>5.Clarity in strategy(1)</p> <p>6.Confidentiality(1)</p>	<p>IMPLEMENTATION & COMMUNICATION</p> <p>15.Influence of company strategies</p> <p>33.Communication issues</p> <p>4.Communication issues</p>

<p>7. Defining role of strategy(1) 8. Design and technology integration(1) 9. Documentation and communication for clarity(4) 10. Exposure and product gating(1) 11. External factors(1) 12. External influence(1) 13. Factors for successful implementation(1) 14. Frequent evaluation and alignment(2) 15. Game concept & tech focus(1) 16. Game enhancement and meta-game aspects(1) 17. Guidance by metrics(2) 18. Guidance on budgeting(1) 19. Impact on decision-making(1) 20. Impact on external factors(1) 21. Influence on work approach(1) 22. Key performance indicators for measurement(1) 23. Market expansion and audience focus(1) 24. Marketing and monetization strategies(1) 25. Outsourced development and misalignment issues(1) 26. Outsourcing for temporary scaling(1) 27. Player motivations and live operations(1) 28. Portfolio expansion and team size(1) 29. Regular updates and open communication(1) 30. Risk allocation on product(3) 31. ROI approach(2) 32. Routine integration(1) 33. Strategic impact decision impacting wider audience(1) 34. Strategies as objectives(1) 35. Team leaders and resource allocation(1) 36. Team structure and development(1) 37. Testing and kick-off(1) 38. Timelines as a crucial aspect(1) 39. Uncertainty of successful implementation(1) 40. Unclear sandboxes and conscious deviation(1)</p>	<p>39. Communication issues 11. External factors and misalignment 25. External factors and misalignment</p> <p>DECISION-MAKING FACTORS 23. Prioritization factors 2. Prioritization factors 17. Prioritization factors 7. Prioritization factors 20. Strategic role definition 36. Decision-making area 24. Decision-making area 16. Decision-making area 6. Decision-making area 27. Decision-making area</p> <p>STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT 34. Goal orientation 19. Work Priority 21. Work Priority 3. Work Priority 32. Work Priority 28. Product goals 32. Product goals 30. Product goals 35. Business goals 31. Business goals 25. Business goals 38. Measurement criteria 22. Measurement criteria 14. Alignment practises 9. Alignment practises 1. Alignment practises 5. Success factors 13. Success factors 8. Success factors 29. Success factors 39. Challenges & considerations 12. Challenges & considerations 37. Challenges & considerations 10. Challenges & considerations</p>
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Appendix 4 – Interview form & questions

	Question
How sophisticated are mobile gaming companies' business and product strategies? - BUSINESS	<p>Can you provide an overview of your company's business strategy? What are the key factors which define your strategy?</p>
	<p>How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your business strategy in achieving set goals?</p>
	<p>How does your company foster innovation and differentiation? What strategies are employed to ensure competitive edge over the competitors.</p>
	<p>Can you provide example of strategic decision your company has made which aligned with your business strategy? How have this decision contributed to the company's success?</p>
	<p>Does your company have a defined target market/customer segment? How does your business strategy address the specific needs and preferences of this market/audience?</p>

	<p>How does your company adapt its business strategy to evolving market trends and changes in the mobile gaming industry? Can you provide examples of strategic adaptations that your company has made and how it affected you.</p>
<p>How sophisticated are mobile gaming companies' business and product strategies? - PRODUCT</p>	<p>Does your company have a strategic goals or long-term vision? How does the business strategy align with this long-term vision?</p>
	<p>Can you describe the product strategy employed by your company and how it affects to the overall business objectives?</p>
	<p>Are there specific objectives or goals in the product strategy? How are they communicated to the team responsible for product development?</p>
	<p>From your perspective as a team member, how does the product strategy implemented by the company contribute to the success of our mobile games?</p>
	<p>Does your company have a defined target market/customer segment? How is this target market defined, and how does it align with the product strategy?</p>
	<p>How does your company gather market research and customer insights to inform its product strategy?</p>

	<p>In your role, how do you see the product strategy shaping the features and design choices in our mobile games?</p>
	<p>Are there any specific competitive advantages or unique value propositions that your company aims to deliver through its mobile games? How does the product strategy support these advantages?</p>
	<p>How does your company approach product portfolio management? Are there specific guidelines or criteria used to prioritize and allocate resources to different products?</p>
	<p>Does your company have a roadmap for product development and launch? How does this roadmap align with the overall product strategy?</p>
	<p>How does your company monitor and evaluate the success of its mobile games? Are there specific metrics or KPIs used to measure the alignment with the product strategy?</p>
<p>How are these strategies understood by managers and team members</p>	<p>How familiar are you with the company's business and product strategies, and how do you think they impact your work as a team member?</p>
	<p>How would you define the core business and product strategies of your company?</p>

within these
companies?

What do you consider to be the key objectives and goals in your business and product strategies?

How familiar are managers and team members within your company with the business and product strategies?

Can you provide examples of how the strategies are translated into actionable plans or initiatives within your department or team?

What measures or practices are in place to ensure a strong understanding of the company's strategies among managers and team members?

How effectively do you think the company communicates and shares its business and product strategies with team members?

Are there any challenges or gaps in understanding the strategies among managers or team members that you have observed or experienced?

How do you perceive the level of support and guidance provided by leadership in helping teams understand and implement the strategies?

How these strategies influence decision-making throughout the product development framework?	How are the business and product strategies integrated into the decision-making process within your department or team?
	How do the strategies guide resource allocation decisions, such as budgeting and staffing, within your department or team?
	Are there specific metrics or performance indicators tied to the strategies that influence decision-making and evaluation of projects or initiatives?
	How does the organization ensure that decisions made at various teams align with the overall strategies of the company?
	In your experience, what factors have been important in successfully implementing the company's strategies during the product development process?
	How do you think the company's strategies impact the prioritization of features, resources, and timelines in the development of your mobile games?
	Can you provide an example of a recent decision you made during the product development process and how you think the company's overall strategies influenced that decision?
	Are there any instances where decisions have deviated from the strategies? If so, what were the reasons behind those deviations?

Appendix 5 – Academic sources of the questions

	Question	Sources
How sophisticated are mobile gaming companies' business and product strategies? - BUSINESS	Can you provide an overview of your company's business strategy? What are the key factors which define your strategy?	Berman, S. J., & Hagan, J. (2006). How technology-driven business strategy can spur innovation and growth.
	How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your business strategy in achieving set goals?	Rumelt, R. P., 1998, "Evaluating business strategy"
	How does your company foster innovation and differentiation? What strategies are employed to ensure competitive edge over the competitors.	Teece, D. J. (2010). Business models, business strategy and innovation.
	Can you provide example of strategic decision your company has made which aligned with your business strategy? How have this decision contributed to the company's success?	Rumelt, R. P. (1998). Evaluating business strategy.
	Does your company have a defined target market/customer segment? How does your business strategy address the specific needs and preferences of this market/audience?	Luna, C. L. H., & Golightly, D. (2017). Business models within mobile gaming experience.
	How does your company adapt its business strategy to evolving market trends and changes in the mobile gaming industry? Can you provide examples of strategic adaptations that your	Vermeulen, F. (2017). Many strategies fail because they're not actually strategies.

	company has made and how it affected you.	
	Does your company have a strategic goals or long-term vision? How does the business strategy align with this long-term vision?	Rumelt, R. P. (1998). Evaluating business strategy.
<p>How sophisticated are mobile gaming companies' business and product strategies? - PRODUCT</p>	Can you describe the product strategy employed by your company and how it affects to the overall business objectives?	Baker, M. J., & Hart, S. J., 2007, "Product strategy and management"
	Are there specific objectives or goals in the product strategy? How are they communicated to the team responsible for product development?	Rumelt, R. P. (1998). Evaluating business strategy.
	From your perspective as a team member, how does the product strategy implemented by the company contribute to the success of our mobile games?	Baker, M. J., & Hart, S. J., 2007, "Product strategy and management"
	Does your company have a defined target market/customer segment? How is this target market defined, and how does it align with the product strategy?	Luna, C. L. H., & Golightly, D. (2017). Business models within mobile gaming experience.
	How does your company gather market research and customer insights to inform its product strategy?	Cooper, R. G. (1984). New product strategies: What distinguishes the top performers?

	<p>In your role, how do you see the product strategy shaping the features and design choices in our mobile games?</p>	<p>Baker, M. J., & Hart, S. J., 2007, "Product strategy and management"</p>
	<p>Are there any specific competitive advantages or unique value propositions that your company aims to deliver through its mobile games? How does the product strategy support these advantages?</p>	<p>Schilling, M. A., & Hill, C. W. (1998). Managing the new product development process: Strategic imperatives.</p>
	<p>How does your company approach product portfolio management? Are there specific guidelines or criteria used to prioritize and allocate resources to different products?</p>	<p>Griffin, A., & Page, A. L. (1996). PDMA success measurement project: Recommended measures for product development success and failure.</p>
	<p>Does your company have a roadmap for product development and launch? How does this roadmap align with the overall product strategy?</p>	<p>Bramble, R. (2023, January). The seven stages of game development.</p>
	<p>How does your company monitor and evaluate the success of its mobile games? Are there specific metrics or KPIs used to measure the alignment with the product strategy?</p>	<p>Griffin, A., & Page, A. L. (1996). PDMA success measurement project: Recommended measures for product development success and failure.</p>
<p>How are these strategies understood by</p>	<p>How familiar are you with the company's business and product strategies, and how do you think they impact your work as a team member?</p>	<p>Beer, M., & Eisenstat, R. A., 2000, "The silent killers of strategy implementation and learning"</p>

managers and team members within these companies?	How would you define the core business and product strategies of your company?	Baker, M. J., & Hart, S. J. (2007). Product strategy and management.
	What do you consider to be the key objectives and goals in your business and product strategies?	Rumelt, R. P. (1998). Evaluating business strategy.
	How familiar are managers and team members within your company with the business and product strategies?	Beer, M., & Eisenstat, R. A., 2000, "The silent killers of strategy implementation and learning"
	Can you provide examples of how the strategies are translated into actionable plans or initiatives within your department or team?	Beer, M., & Eisenstat, R. A. (2000). The silent killers of strategy implementation and learning.
	What measures or practices are in place to ensure a strong understanding of the company's strategies among managers and team members?	Blumentritt, T., & Danis, W. M., 2006, "Business strategy types and innovative practices"
	How effectively do you think the company communicates and shares its business and product strategies with team members?	Beer, M., & Eisenstat, R. A., 2000, "The silent killers of strategy implementation and learning"
	Are there any challenges or gaps in understanding the strategies among managers or team members that you have observed or experienced?	Li, Y., Guohui, S., & Eppler, M. J. (2008). Making strategy work: A literature review on the factors influencing strategy implementation.

	How do you perceive the level of support and guidance provided by leadership in helping teams understand and implement the strategies?	Li, Y., Guohui, S., & Eppler, M. J. (2008). Making strategy work: A literature review on the factors influencing strategy implementation.
	How are the business and product strategies integrated into the decision-making process within your department or team?	Berman, S. J., & Hagan, J. (2006). How technology-driven business strategy can spur innovation and growth.
	How do the strategies guide resource allocation decisions, such as budgeting and staffing, within your department or team?	Schilling, M. A., & Hill, C. W. (1998). Managing the new product development process: Strategic imperatives.
How these strategies influence decision-making throughout the product development framework?	Are there specific metrics or performance indicators tied to the strategies that influence decision-making and evaluation of projects or initiatives?	Griffin, A., & Page, A. L. (1996). PDMA success measurement project: Recommended measures for product development success and failure.
	How does the organization ensure that decisions made at various teams align with the overall strategies of the company?	Li, Y., Guohui, S., & Eppler, M. J. (2008). Making strategy work: A literature review on the factors influencing strategy implementation.
	In your experience, what factors have been important in successfully implementing the company's strategies during the product development process?	Li, Y., Guohui, S., & Eppler, M. J., 2008, "Making strategy work: A literature review on

		the factors influencing strategy implementation"
	How do you think the company's strategies impact the prioritization of features, resources, and timelines in the development of your mobile games?	Schilling, M. A., & Hill, C. W., 1998, "Managing the new product development process: Strategic imperatives"
	Can you provide an example of a recent decision you made during the product development process and how you think the company's overall strategies influenced that decision?	Schilling, M. A., & Hill, C. W., 1998, "Managing the new product development process: Strategic imperatives"
	Are there any instances where decisions have deviated from the strategies? If so, what were the reasons behind those deviations?	Beer, M., & Eisenstat, R. A. (2000). The silent killers of strategy implementation and learning.

Appendix 6 – Introduction email from the CEO and reply to all interviewees

Appendix 6 – Email to Individual interviewee after introduction

