

Finding Your Niche

<https://youtu.be/vid5yZRKzs0>

<https://www.gdcvault.com/play/1024461/Strategic-Design-Or-Why-Dark>

<https://trello.com/c/qdBIyHvS/59-why-dark-souls-is-the-ikea-of-games>

https://trello-attachments.s3.amazonaws.com/5f90e6f3d6aabd1d02071e22/5ff16ab21f2e552b7d8775f1/49a015ab1ad1fa5ef8642470336bff26/Fischer_Justin_StrategicDesign.pdf

Here's a great discussion about the importance of finding your niche. This applies more broadly to career, life purpose, and/or business.

One of the biggest mistakes people make in biz is that they try to appeal too broadly and pleasing no one. Don't be afraid to be uniquely you, whether that's in your career choices or in your dating life. Offer the world something unique that only you can provide.

Why Dark Souls Is The 'Ikea' Of Games

“It's about the tradeoffs you decide on as a designer. ...It's like playing an RPG where you have 20 points to allocate to strength, dexterity and intelligence. You can't have it all.”

-Cliff Bleszinski

who our target end-user is
what the competitive set looks like and
what our best practices are

A TALE OF TWO GAMES

- *Dark Souls*
- October 2011 Launch
- 2 Years Development
- 3.07MM Units*
- “Success”
- *Resident Evil 6*
- October 2012 Launch
- 2 Years Development
- 5.16MM Units*
- “Failure”

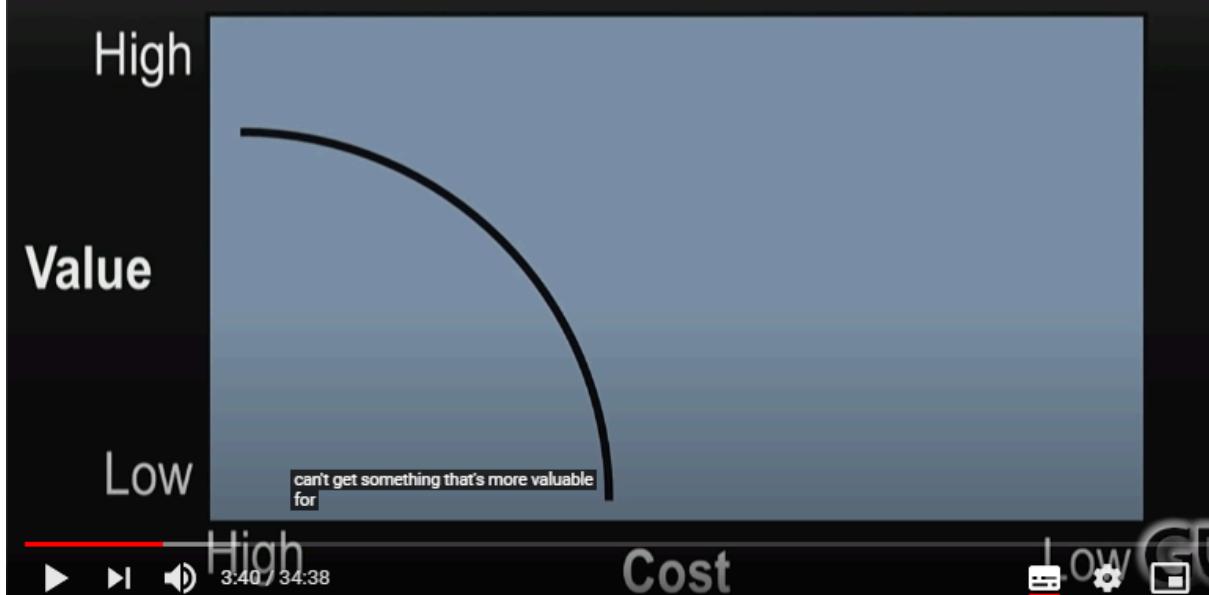
success and Resident Evil six is a

MICHAEL PORTER

- Harvard Business School
- Luminary
- Claims to Fame:
 - Five Forces Analysis
 - “Competitive Advantage”



THE PRODUCTIVITY FRONTIER



the productivity frontier

this graph compares the value I product has for the end user versus the cost to make it that arc represents the line of best practice

it's the equilibrium point in a market you can't do better than that line you can't get something that's more valuable for customers that are costing more and you can't cut cost without reducing value

bạn không thể nhận được thứ gì đó có giá trị hơn cho những khách hàng đang trả nhiều tiền hơn và bạn không thể cắt giảm chi phí mà không giảm giá trị

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

- “Faster, cheaper, better” is only a temporary advantage
- You cannot build a sustainable market advantage on operational efficiency alone

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

- “What Is Strategy?”
 - *Harvard Business Review*, 1996
- “Competitive Advantage”
 - Being Different
 - Making Trade-Offs
 - Achieving “Fit”

different making tr
achieving fit so

BEING DIFFERENT

- Create a unique and valuable position:
 - Serve few needs of many customers
 - Serve many needs of few customers
 - Serve many needs of many customers in a narrow market

THE KAWASAKI MATRIX

	Not Unique	Unique
Valuable	Compete on Margin	BE THIS GUY!!!
Not Valuable	Dot Com Boom	"You're just stupid"

buy you can charge them the price that
they think is



MAKING TRADE-OFFS

- Doing everything isn't a strategy
- It's indecision
- You need to choose what not to do
- Some activities are incompatible



“FIT”

- Your activities need to “fit” each other
- Interact
- Reinforce one another

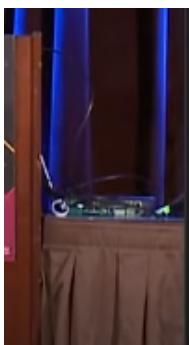
WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- **Being different** allows you to uniquely serve a target audience
- **Trade-offs** allow you to serve the target at a lower cost than anyone else



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- “**Fit**” makes it harder for competitors to follow your lead
 - They can’t just replicate one aspect of your value chain
 - They have to replicate **all** of it



PORTRER'S CLASSIC EXAMPLE:

Southwest®

Southwest[®] WAS DIFFERENT

- Southwest Airlines was all things to few people
 - Full service airline
 - Catering to price-sensitive customers
 - Who didn't care about perks
 - Flying between regional airports

Southwest[®] MADE TRADE-OFFS

- Regional airports, not “hub & spoke”
- No frequent flier
- No 1st class seating
- No baggage transfers
- 737 jets only - no long-haul flights

Southwest[®] HAD “FIT”

- Less competition at regional airports
- Streamlined ticketing
- Faster turnarounds (15 min vs. typical 30)
- Reduced training for crews and fewer spare parts

THE NET EFFECT

- Southwest was faster, cheaper, and better
- But only for the target consumer
- No secret sauce, just operational harmony



IS DIFFERENT

- All things to few people, like Southwest
 - Young, working professionals
 - Price sensitive
 - Not time sensitive
 - Rigid schedules



MAKES TRADE-OFFS

- Typically in the suburbs
- No show-people
- No customization and you build it yourself
- Food court and child care
- Open late



HAS “FIT”

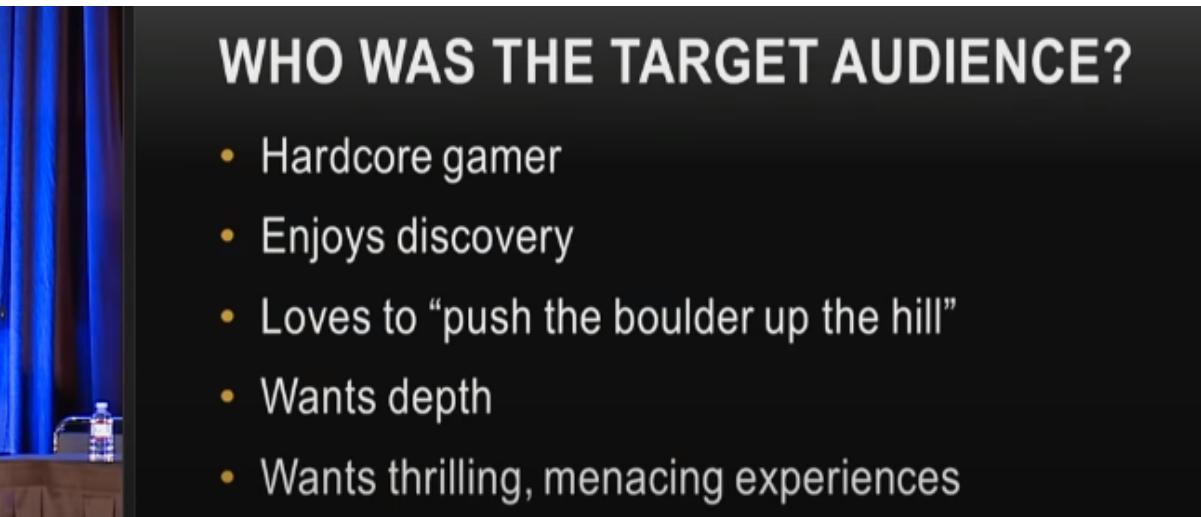
- Suburbs = bigger parking lots & facilities
 - Time-insensitive customers will make the trek
- No show-people = less staff
 - Customers are fine showing themselves around

THE ADVANTAGES OF WYSIWYG

- Don't need sales people
- Streamlined manufacturing
- Easy to store and deliver
- Time-insensitive customers don't mind building

THE NET EFFECT

- Ikea is cheaper and easier
 - Again, for the target customer!
- While still being profitable
- But it has reduced appeal to price-insensitive, time-starved consumers who want high quality and customization



WHO WAS THE TARGET AUDIENCE?

- Hardcore gamer
- Enjoys discovery
- Loves to “push the boulder up the hill”
- Wants depth
- Wants thrilling, menacing experiences

DID IT MEET THE CRITERIA?

- Was *Dark Souls* different?
- Did *Dark Souls* make trade-offs?
- Did *Dark Souls* have “fit”?

DARK SOULS WAS DIFFERENT

- Hardcore
- Unforgiving
- No frills game
- In a industry of cinematic, mass-market titles

frills game in an industry of cinematic mass-market titles I'm pretty



DARK SOULS MADE TRADE-OFFS

- Few cinematics
- Almost no tutorial
- One difficulty level
- Sparse music
- Limited multiplayer
- Not cutting edge engine

TUTORIAL IN OTHER VIDEOGAMES



...t exactly using a cutting-edge
engine

GDC