

## Episode 10: Green games: how to green up your gaming

[00:00:00]

[music]

[00:00:07] **Jennifer Estaris:** We get to work with them and to work in the spirit of the [00:00:10] greater good to try to save the world together. It was very Avenger-style.

[00:00:15] **Dirk Primbs:** Running on trains as a means of commuting. That's the missing part. I knew it.

[00:00:20] **Tamzin Taylor:** [00:00:20] Jennifer, it sounds like you've set the criteria for the measurement for 2021.

[00:00:24] **Jennifer:** The nudge factor.

[laughter]

[00:00:26] **Deborah Mensah-Bonsu:** I think it's such a great indicator to show how much people [00:00:30] want this kind of content and how much people care and want to do something good.

[music] [00:00:40]

[00:00:42] **Dirk:** Environmental challenges are at the forefront of conversations and actions taking place throughout the world. While global agreements and pledges [00:00:50] have been signed to combat these problems at the macro level, there are ways in which people in businesses can make a positive impact on the micro-level too. For game developers, introducing [00:01:00] climate change, education, and action through gameplay is becoming more and more popular and can have a lasting impact on players and the environment.

[00:01:08] **Tamzin:** Welcome to the Apps, Games, & [00:01:10] Insights podcast. We're your hosts, Tamzin Taylor and Dirk Primbs from Google. In this episode, we'll be exploring the innovative ways in which game studios are educating players [00:01:20] about climate change through their existing games and how this type of in-game awareness and learning is on the rise. We're very lucky today to be joined by Jennifer Estaris, [00:01:30] Game Director at SYBO Games, and Deborah Mensah-Bonsu founder of Games for Good and former Head of Content at Space Ape Games. They'll be sharing with us their [00:01:40] expert knowledge on climate change education through games and the positive impact this has had so far following the recent Green Game Jam.

[00:01:48] **Dirk:** All right. Welcome, Deborah, Jennifer. [00:01:50] Good to have you. How are you doing?

[00:01:52] **Jennifer:** Thank you for having us.

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**[00:01:53] Deborah:** Yes, thank you. Fun to be here.

**[00:01:55] Tamzin:** So I guess to kick-off, tell us a bit about yourselves and what do you do?

**[00:01:58] Jennifer:** Sure. So as Tamzin mentioned, **[00:02:00]** I'm, uh, the Founder of Games for Good. It's a consultancy that's focused on using games for social impact. So helping companies leverage their studios, products, and **[00:02:10]** player communities for change. And before that, I was the head of content at Space Ape Games. And before that, [chuckles] I was, uh, at X-Box. So I've been in the industry about **[00:02:20]** seven years now wearing a lot of different hats. And, uh, my background is actually in journalism. So I was in, uh, print and TV journalism before I moved into games.

**[00:02:30] Tamzin:** **[00:02:30]** Excellent. Thanks, Deborah. Jennifer.

**[00:02:32] Jennifer:** Yeah. I've been in the industry for about 15 years. I'm currently Game Director at SYBO, the developers of the Subway Surfers. It's a hit mobile **[00:02:40]** game with over 3 billion downloads, and 100 million monthly active users. My background is primarily in game design where I've worked at large companies like Nickelodeon and Disney, as well as smaller studios, **[00:02:50]** especially those with a social change focus.

**[00:02:52] Tamzin:** Fantastic. Now, we've heard about this Green Game Jam thing. Wha-what is it first of all?

**[00:02:58] Jennifer:** Well, I could start with what's a game jam. **[00:03:00]** And a game jam is like an event where teams or individuals have a short amount of time to make a playable game, like usually, around three days. It's pretty intense. **[00:03:10]** For comparison sakes, it can take about a few months to a few years to make a typical video game. So we see this as really, really tight morsels of creative energy. **[00:03:20]** But a green game jam, Debra, perhaps has more insights into that.

[laughter]

**[00:03:25] Deborah:** No. I thought that was a perfect description. That's basically also how we ran the green game jam. **[00:03:30]** I mean, usually, game jams have some kind of focus like there's a theme or some kind of focus that people jam around, and we decided to do a green game jam **[00:03:40]** based around environmental actions back in the spring of last year, or, sorry, no back in the spring of this year. Oh, this year. [laughs]

**[00:03:49] Tamzin:** 2020. **[00:03:50]** What can we say?

**[00:03:50] Deborah:** 2020, how many years has it been? Anyways, so, uh, we decided to host a green game jam with, uh, 11 different mobile gaming studios **[00:04:00]** to try

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to encourage green nudges and games and try to really rally the player community to take environmental action. And usually within a game jam, **[00:04:10]** uh, you would be creating things from scratch. So prototyping things, coming up with new game ideas, whereas in this game jam, we decided that we already had **[00:04:20]** the games that we wanted to reach our players with.

So we decided that we were going to, um, hack our existing titles and try to incorporate these green nudges into those games, **[00:04:30]** rather than trying to come up with, uh, some kind of green game and then hope that it's a success and then hope to reach people. We thought, "Well, we already have the audiences in our titles. So we might as well **[00:04:40]** use those games to reach people."

**[00:04:43] Dirk:** So do I have to imagine that as some kind of hackathon where you basically invited random developers to write, **[00:04:50]** uh, things, or was it more like you hand-picked a number of candidates that then came in and worked on their titles? Which one was it or how do I have to imagine that?

**[00:05:00] Deborah:** **[00:05:00]** Let me back up a little bit about, uh, how the Green Game Jam came about now that we know that-- what it is. So around last summer our CEO at Space-Ape **[00:05:10]** Games, John Earner decided that really climate change and the things that are happening to our-our planet are one of the most important issues that we are **[00:05:20]** facing in our current time. He's obviously not alone, many people agree. And he thought that as the leader of this company, he wanted to do something about it and he wanted to do his **[00:05:30]** part.

And so it basically started with him saying, "Okay, how do we offset, or how do we mitigate our own footprint so that we can play our own role?" So **[00:05:40]** we, uh, formed a little green team at Space-Ape, which consisted of John, myself, and then our head of tech, Nick. And we basically set about trying to **[00:05:50]** measure what our footprint was. We had to do a bunch of research to try to figure out what is in scope for us. How do you even go about measuring these things? What do you count in your **[00:06:00]** footprint? What do you not count? Where are the sources to be able to get that information?

Some things are better documented than others. For example, like your flights are really-- it's really easy to **[00:06:10]** track if you use like a booking company, for example. Whereas other things like cloud usage, depending on which provider you use is very difficult. **[00:06:20]** So we came up with, I guess, a four-step process, not just by ourselves, we used other people who had gone before us and used their knowledge, which we would definitely **[00:06:30]** recommend, you know, rather than reinventing the wheel, try to build on what other people have done in the past.

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So we decided to measure up footprint and then offset the footprint that we have. [00:06:40] And then also to mitigate that footprint and going forward and help other studios do the same. So we outlined our process, uh, in a blog. That's on our website, [00:06:50] we open source all of our material, all of our spreadsheets. And there are lots of those and lots of calculations. It can be daunting at first, but yeah, once you get going, i-it does get very [00:07:00] interesting as well. And then trying to find reputable projects to offset through, that's another rabbit hole that you can go down.

There's a lot of shysters out there who try to sell you [00:07:10] carbon credits that are not doing what they say they will do. And around the same time, Jude from PlayMob introduced me to Sam Barratt at the UN [00:07:20] environment program, who was also trying to rally the games industry for action on climate. So Sam came into our office, we had a good chat. He [00:07:30] said, there's this thing called playing for the planet in September at the UN Climate Summit. I wanna, you know, gather different companies within the industry to make commitments about [00:07:40] their footprint and about mitigating their footprint.

We said, "Cool, we're doing that work already. We're on board."

So we joined, I think about 20 other companies in September of last year, [00:07:50] made those commitments public. So yeah, we were all sitting around in our office, uh, brainstorming ideas on how we could get more of the industry [00:08:00] on board and innovative creative ways. And then John, kind of, thought, "Oh, what about a game jam? You know, we're all competitive. We all love games. We're creative, [00:08:10] this is what we do." Surely, we could get more of the industry on board and-and trying to find interesting solutions to-to climate change by doing a game jam. So that's how the idea of this [00:08:20] jam was born.

And then John started recruiting, invite-only. That's how the first jam was. And Mathias from SYBO came aboard [00:08:30] really quickly. And then those two basically tagged, teamed this jam and recruited the biggest mobile gaming studios to get them on board, to participate [00:08:40] in what was supposed to be a two-day game jam where all these studios were meant to commit two days within the span of a week to stop business as usual and [00:08:50] commit to this jam. And then the pandemic hit.

[00:08:54] Tamzin: Oh-oh.

[laughter]

[00:08:58] Deborah: Yeah, sorry. Long-long winded [00:09:00] explanation, but that's how it came about. And so it went from two days to about three months, as everybody tried to adjust to, you know, the new normal and working from home and [00:09:10]

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trying to make sure that our businesses were still running and thriving whilst also committing to this jam.

**[00:09:17] Tamzin:** Can you give us a flavor of some of the developers who were **[00:09:20]** involved in the jam?

**[00:09:21] Deborah:** Yes, sure. The developers involved in the jam Space Ape, obviously SYBO. And then we had the guys at Fingersoft who **[00:09:30]** were jamming with Hill climb racing 2. We had Mag Interactive who'd used both their games, WordBrain and WordBrain 2 to incorporate activations into. We had **[00:09:40]** Rovio, so Angry Birds 2 was on board. We had Pixelberry with Choices. We had Creative Mobile and Zoo Craft: Animal Family. And then we had Wild Works **[00:09:50]** and Animal Jam. And those were our 11 studios that we had on board. With-- there were a couple of others which ended up having to drop out because of well, **[00:10:00]** obvious reasons. But everybody who committed, like really did follow through which was really just inspiring to see and I think we all needed something good, **[00:10:10]** you know, to rally around and hold onto during this like very uncertain time.

**[00:10:15] Tamzin** And Jennifer, when you first heard about this Green Game Jam, what were your initial thoughts? **[00:10:20]** Have you seen anything like this before?

**[00:10:21] Jennifer:** This is the first that I've seen and when Mathias mentioned it, I believe it was an-- over an email, I just started typing furiously, I was so excited, **[00:10:30]** I mean, this is one of the things that Mathias and I, and a few other people at SYBO had talked about internally but we didn't know how to activate, and we definitely didn't know **[00:10:40]** how to activate with other studios collaborating with us so this was exciting.

**[00:10:44] Tamzin:** And do you think that was a unique difference actually collaborating with a whole bunch of what might be your competitors looking at **[00:10:50]** from-from one angle?

**[00:10:51] Jennifer:** Our competitors the-the enemy, we-we got to work with them and-and to work in the spirit of the greater good, right? To try to save the world together. **[00:11:00]** It's very Avenger-style.

**[00:11:01] Tamzin:** Excellent.

**[00:11:02] Deborah:** [chuckles] Yeah, yeah, so true.

**[00:11:03] Tamzin:** And how did you come up with the ideas? I guess the remit was to create something that would change user behavior, is that right, Debora? **[00:11:10]** How would you describe the objectives?

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**[00:11:11] Deborah:** Yeah, so the objectives were something that we came up with alongside the UN environment program because, you know, we know games **[00:11:20]** and we know our players and engaging people, but we're not experts on climate science and we don't pretend to be. So we knew that it was really important to get that other side and that **[00:11:30]** expertise. So we had UNIP and experts in climate science and in climate change and reforestation basically help us shape those goals so they could **[00:11:40]** tell us what was most impactful or what is most meaningful to create.

So we had one objective around individual behaviors. So that could be the food you eat, **[00:11:50]** the clothes you wear, et cetera. Uh, we had one around reforestation, we had one around renewable energy. And then the last one we called Sandbox because this was the first time **[00:12:00]** we were doing something and we realized that game studios are wildly creative and smart, and maybe they will come up with something that we haven't thought of that is **[00:12:10]** actually really impactful and meaningful. So we said, there's got to be a wild card in there just in case somebody comes up with something that we wouldn't have thought of.

And then we had to each pick an **[00:12:20]** objective as a team that we wanted to rally around. And we also had about two weeks worth of workshops with these different experts in the different fields to help us **[00:12:30]** shape our goals and to also inspire us, to teach us, educate us, to figure out how we could make something that was meaningful.

**[00:12:39] Dirk Primbs:** Yeah, I mean, imagine **[00:12:40]** also that it hugely depends on what the typical players of each given games are, what type of knowledge and behavior change who can push through that, right?

**[00:12:49] Deborah:** Yeah, definitely, **[00:12:50]** I think first off it's, "Ooh, which one of these objectives or what theme kind of excites you as a team." And then marrying that quite closely with, "Okay, what fits our title **[00:13:00]** and what our players be interested in?" Because you don't want to force something that shouldn't be there. It's nice when it can be quite organic. So I think that's how we started out **[00:13:10]** and trying to narrow down the activations that we were going to build. And then there was a lot of brainstorming.

And I think it was probably different-- a little different for each team I don't know about you, **[00:13:20]** Jen, how you guys started and settled on-on what you guys wanted to create.

**[00:13:24] Deborah:** We had met briefly as a team, as an internal SYBO team to talk about our different ideas. **[00:13:30]** One of my favorites was this one based on five-minute abs, but instead of five-minute abs, it's like five minutes saving the world every day. But one of my favorite things about the jam experience **[00:13:40]** was the

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fact that Deborah especially fostered this sharing culture between the game teams and with the webinar experts.

So we had people come and talk about citizen [00:13:50] science, about living off the grid about, you know, conservation messaging, just all these topics that we didn't know about. And she helped connect those dots to what [00:14:00] we were working on. And then we connected those dots with the other studios to see how can we inspire each other and elevate our ideas to the next level.

**[00:14:08] Tamzin:** That is so exciting. I have to [00:14:10] ask you, do you think that now that you've made those connections, I mean, you probably knew all the other studios to begin with, but that form of sharing ideas and best practices, do you think that's going to [00:14:20] continue?

**[00:14:20] Jennifer:** I hope so. Debrah, it will continue, yes?

**[00:14:23] Deborah:** I definitely think so, we've got a Game Jam Slack group, we've got emails and things that go out where people share [00:14:30] updates. And whenever a new activation releases and a game or somebody stumbles on something that's exciting, like they share it with everyone. Or if somebody finds [00:14:40] a really interesting partner to work with, whether it's like a reforestation organization or something, they'll share it with everybody and say, "Hey, how about these guys?" So I think that [00:14:50] spirit of collaboration is like very strong and I think it's only going to grow and we're definitely looking for that for 2021 as well.

**[00:14:58] Tamzin:** Excellent. **Jennifer** One of the things that came [00:15:00] out of the jam was the fact that we started talking about how do we put our forces together and work towards one direction, this the sum being greater than its parts. We wanted to see if we could work on the [00:15:10] same thing together. And I think that's going to be exciting for next year.

**[00:15:13] Tamzin:** Awesome. Give us a bit of a flavor of some of the executions. Like, Jennifer, what did Subway Surfers do? How did you bring it to life in a game?

**[00:15:20]**

**[00:15:20] Jennifer:** We definitely took the idea of green nudging and wanted to see how we can do it more in Subway Surfers. So with green assets in the environment, renewable energy like wind turbines [00:15:30] and solar panels as you run. Subway Surfers is a game where you're running on train tracks. So we already have public transportation in there. We already have running as a means of commuting, [00:15:40] but how do we add more without being too much-

**[00:15:43] Dirk:** Running on trains as the means of commuting-

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**[00:15:45] Jennifer:** Yes, right.

**[00:15:45] Dirk:** -that's the missing part. I knew it [laughs].

**[00:15:48] Jennifer:** Extra exercise in there? **[00:15:50]** And so we added renewable energy stations, recycling stations, and bins, nature reminders. So, of course, we already have things like flowers, waterfalls, rainbows, **[00:16:00]** but just a little bit more in your face. And then in terms of the location, every few weeks, Subway Surfers goes to a different like real-world location. **[00:16:10]** So this time around, we wanted to pick a place that was on the frontlines of the climate crisis. We played around with a few different ideas and I went with Bali in the end. **[00:16:20]** It was one of the main centers for marine biodiversity. And we added a few other activations in there.

So pickups, as you ran, you picked up plastic bottles **[00:16:30]** in exchange for rewards. We had a green sale. So we tried to do as much as we could to normalize these topics for our average player. And then we wanted to educate **[00:16:40]** and connect those thoughts through social media. So we had a lot of fun facts and surveys and quizzes and ways to further, uh, engage the audience.

**[00:16:48] Tamzin:** Amazing. Deborah, what was some other activations **[00:16:50]** that you can remember you'd like to highlight?

**[00:16:53] Deborah:** I can remember Space Apes very well because I was heavily involved with that. [laughs] Um, but for Space Ape, we used Transformers: Earth Wars. **[00:17:00]** And we decided to focus on the theme of renewable energy because it matched very well just with the story of the game. Basically, in the game, the Transformers **[00:17:10]** had already had to leave their home planet of Cybertron because it was ravaged because of unsustainable means of harvesting their energy source, Energon. And so they come to earth **[00:17:20]** because they're looking for new energy sources. So we decided to write a new campaign, a new story around the possibility of the same thing happening to Earth.

So then these two **[00:17:30]** groups who are usually rival, the Autobots and Decepticons, [laughs] uh, they ended up joining forces to try to find this renewable source of energy out of **[00:17:40]** altruism for one, and then pragmatism for the other 'cause they realized, "Well, we need the energy source to, you know, keep doing our thing." And they go on a search for this thing called the Helio Harvester, **[00:17:50]** which is a solar-powered building that players get once they complete the campaign, which sits on their canvas and which boosts the Energon production from all other buildings on the canvas. **[00:18:00]** And it's really nice because it's there forever.

So every time players go in, they're gonna see that reminder and that building. And of course, they would have gone through this **[00:18:10]** whole campaign as well, which

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would have taught them about renewable energy sources. And we also partnered with Ren21, which is a renewable energy organization, [00:18:20] to basically create like a little piece of citizen science and collect data on renewable energy options available in different parts of the world 'cause that's really lacking right [00:18:30] now. And, uh, I think that's the frustration on both sides.

You know, we can say, "We're going to bring you the players so that they can do something cool around renewable energy." And then on their side, [00:18:40] they're saying, "Well, we don't know exactly where we want them to be sent because we don't have enough data." So we're sort of trying in our small way to address that problem. [00:18:50] And then we also asked our players to take a pledge, to switch from incandescent to led light bulbs, uh, which are like eight times more efficient. And [00:19:00] we've had more than 14,000 players fill out that survey and take that pledge so far, which is very cool because we had no idea how people were gonna respond [00:19:10] to this.

But so far it's been cool. So that was space ape, but there were some amazing activations like choices. So the guys at Pixelberry, they created a whole new book, [00:19:20] a whole new story around this fishing village, which is basically seeing like a die-off of all their fish. And it has these two characters that are sort of becoming advocates [00:19:30] for the environment. And one is sort of trying to convince another. So they created this whole storyline around it, which is amazing. That's going live at the end of October, I believe.

The guys at [00:19:40] Playdemic for golf clash, they're looking to incorporate messaging about climate change, which is a really brave thing to do when you have an audience that may not necessarily be [00:19:50] open or welcoming to that kind of message. So I think that in itself is a huge win, uh, same for the guys at Fingersoft, uh, [00:20:00] for Hill Climb Racing 2. The game's a lot about cars and driving and exhaust. So to incorporate that is a huge win.

[00:20:07] **Tamzin:** And they elegantly incorporated by having, I think [00:20:10] it was electrical and hybrid parts for their vehicles-

[00:20:13] **Deborah:** Exactly.

[00:20:13] **Tamzin:** -which makes sense.

[00:20:15] **Dirk:** You know, the cars with the most torque are right now-

[00:20:17] **Tamzin:** Yes.

[00:20:17] **Dirk:** -the electric cars. So you can-

[00:20:18] **Tamzin:** Absolutely.

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**[00:20:19] Dirk:** -even get the car people **[00:20:20]** on board.

[laughter]

**[00:20:21] Deborah:** Exactly. But yeah, definitely urge everyone to check out all the activations, there were lots-- some people-- WildWorks incorporated like a new **[00:20:30]** ecosystem where players can get eco credits by having certain things within their dens. And animal jam raised a bunch of money for this conservation trust for wolves. **[00:20:40]** So lots of stuff out there.

**[00:20:42] Jennifer:** Hungry Shark also had a focus on the coral reefs and the underwater activations. And then I think Angry Birds 2 had a reforestation **[00:20:50]** themed community event.

**[00:20:52] Tamzin:** The listeners at home might be wondering, where can I see a list of all those games and understand what they've done? Where should they go, Deborah?

**[00:20:59] Deborah:** Uh, so there is a-a website **[00:21:00]** where you can check out, not just the Green Game Jam, but playing for the planet as a whole. And that's [playing4theplanet.org](http://playing4theplanet.org) and then [/thegreenmobilegamejam](http://thegreenmobilegamejam). **[00:21:10]** I'm sure we can share some links with you guys as well.

So you can see every single pitch that was created and also when the activations are going live, some of them **[00:21:20]** already went live in the summer. Lots of them are going live now in the fall. And then there's a few that are going live beginning to-to spring next year.

**[00:21:29] Tamzin:** Awesome. **[00:21:30]** And you can download all those on Google play, just in case you're wondering. Sorry, I had to put-- plug in that.

[laughter]

**[00:21:36] Deborah:** No, definitely. I mean, Google has been amazing at supporting **[00:21:40]** this initiative. Like right from the very start, when I was looking for experts to help educate us, Tamzin was like a force, she's like, "Here, I have people from all over **[00:21:50]** the world that you can talk to, let me connect you with them." Like she's been incredible. And you know, the whole team at Google has been super supportive, also giving the games **[00:22:00]** that have included these activations featuring. So I think that's massive as well because that'll inspire other developers to do the same. So I think we're on the right track.

**[00:22:09] Tamzin:** Cool. One **[00:22:10]** thing that I was most excited by, by seeing all these pictures were two things really. The first, going back to the point about collaboration. I've always thought that the games industry was super innovative and

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collaborative, [00:22:20] but seeing all of these developers share their ideas just filled me with so much joy because I believe that that's how you get better ideas. But one of the other things in gaming is clearly there's- there's always a push [00:22:30] to do something innovative and different. How do you think innovation is key here is tackling these environmental issues?

**[00:22:37] Deborah:** Innovation, especially in this space is [00:22:40] really important because we're all still learning and we're running out of time. So I think for all of us who are just kind of waking up to the idea, like we should [00:22:50] have woken up many, many years ago. And I don't know if any of you have seen, you know, the David Attenborough piece on Netflix, the new one. And you know, he's saying that [00:23:00] he's traveled all around the world and he thought he was seeing all these pristine environments and wildlife and the ecosystems, et cetera, when really when he was going around, [00:23:10] he thought he was in all these remote places.

All of these places were already starting to die. And that really hit home for me as well, you know, like we are behind, we're late and [00:23:20] we actually need to be moving a lot quicker. And games is the space for innovation. I think we're always at the forefront.

**[00:23:28] Jennifer:** Yeah, for innovation and for behavior [00:23:30] change, for attitude change. That's what games do anyway. Why don't we do it for good. **Tamzin:** One of the key questions that always comes up when I talk about this to people, we know that games is very performance-driven [00:23:40] sector. I mean, I must say that when I first started working in gaming, I didn't realize how actually having a degree in economics would actually be a plus given how numbers-focused [00:23:50] it is. How do you measure your objectives and success on these green nudge implementation?

**[00:23:57] Deborah:** Yeah, I think that's a great question. I think for the jam for this time [00:24:00] around, we weren't so much looking at how are we going to measure this stuff. We were trying to figure out how can we reach people in effective ways [00:24:10] and what does that look like? But that being said, uh, I think every team is really keen on figuring out, you know, what impact did this have with my player community and with the goals that [00:24:20] we were trying to reach. I know that SYBO has done a breakdown of what they've done. Uh, it's maybe easier for some teams who are trying to raise funds, then they can say, "We had this goal, [00:24:30] we reached the goal."

For us, I think that'll also depend on what Ren21 says. If they get 20,000 different answers, is that good for them? Is that considered a win? [00:24:40] That's something that we'll have to figure out still, but also why for next year, we're trying to fine-tune our approach and our objectives so that we [00:24:50] can align around slightly more specific goals so that we can measure the impact more easily. Because right now, like,

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yes, of course, we can say we've had [00:25:00] an impact and we're reaching 250 million players. And however we do that with this kind of messaging, I think is great.

But for next year, we definitely want to focus more around restoration. [00:25:10] So forests and oceans, forests in particular. If you look at like the degradation of forests, it's like the third worst [00:25:20] polluter. If you look at forest in terms of countries, it would be like the third biggest country, the way that forests are being degraded. [00:25:30] So we're definitely focusing around forest conservation and reforestation, and then also looking at what we can do with oceans.

[00:25:38] **Jennifer:** For SYBO in terms of measuring, we wanted to [00:25:40] approach this in, uh, at least two phases. So phase one was to just make sure that we didn't have a negative impact on our players by including green activations. So that was what we did for [00:25:50] this year is to focus on that. And then I think phase two would be more incremental changes and more scientific approaches.

So for phase one, yes, we didn't have a negative [00:26:00] impact. We did an assessment after the event ran and not only quantitatively did we see more engagement of players and better KPIs in [00:26:10] general, but we also saw a lot of qualitative feedback from our players. Just really positive, really engaged with the content, really engaged with giving their ideas [00:26:20] and how to make the world a better place.

And then in terms of the fun facts, we did something that we're calling the nudge factor. So we're working on some visuals [00:26:30] right now to talk about how many players interact with the content, how much green nudging did they see a day? So it was-- for Subway Surface, it was a hundred green nudges a day, a nudge every nine seconds, [00:26:40] 43 billion nudges. So what does all this mean? I think this is-- we're just setting the baseline now and, you know, kind of like the control for next year screen jam.

[00:26:50] **Tamzin:** Jennifer, [00:26:50] it sounds like you've set the criteria for the measurement for 2021.

[00:26:54] **Jennifer:** The nudge factor.

[00:26:57] **Deborah:** Not surprising at all. Just amazing [laughs].

[00:27:00] **Tamzin:** [00:27:00] That's absolutely awesome. And Deborah, I think recall like John had mentioned that you'd had some really good feedback from something you did price the Green Game Jam around the Australian bush fires.

[00:27:10] **Deborah:** Yeah. [00:27:10] I think, you know, when you talk about, is there a business case for this stuff? I think definitely. And I think more of our players are asking for us to do this. So when we had back in January, [00:27:20] gosh, that was

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also 2020, Yikes. Yeah, when-when Australia was facing the bush fires, we actually had some of our VIP players right in and say, **[00:27:30]** "Hey guys, we play your game. We love your game. Is there any way that we can help with and through your game?"

And so immediately some people on the transformers team **[00:27:40]** and myself were like, "Yes, there should be a way." And so within the span of a week, we-- I guess it was almost like a mini-jam. You know, we got together and tried to figure out what can we **[00:27:50]** incorporate into our games to help? And it wasn't that difficult. You know, we included a bundle into our game that players could buy and all the proceeds would go towards **[00:28:00]** two different organizations that were on the ground trying to tackle this fire.

And I think within the span of four days, we raised more than a hundred thousand dollars. **[00:28:10]** And our engagement within that particular time was like 10 times higher from players. So I think there's a lot to be done around calculating, **[00:28:20]** "Okay, well then afterwards, did the players drop off? And the following weeks was revenue lower?" Et cetera, et cetera. But I think it's such a great indicator to show how much **[00:28:30]** people want this kind of content and how much people care and want to do something good.

And if they can align themselves with your game or with your company, because of **[00:28:40]** those things, I think they'll do it. And I think that will happen more and more. And honestly, like companies and games that don't take that into account are not going to **[00:28:50]** thrive the way that they could.

**[00:28:52] Dirk:** It's also such a great framing, right? So people who play games, you give them some agency, they actually have a direct connection and a positive impact, **[00:29:00]** and it can be everything from educating yourself, to crowdsourcing something, to actually crowdfunding something, to behavior change, **[00:29:10]** all of this in a package. It's almost weird that this should be limited to games. So I think it's something everybody who has a way of reaching an audience in whatever **[00:29:20]** shape or form can take a look at the methods that you discover and the different flavors that you experiment with.

**[00:29:27] Tamzin:** Yeah. And Deborah, I guess, you know, to all the people **[00:29:30]** in the audience, you heard it first from Deborah. If you run a gaming company, this is something you should really be focusing on. Deborah, for all the people out there who are thinking, "Oh my God, I can't believe they've done such a great job. **[00:29:40]** I am in some country far, far away, I don't know if I'm ever going to get into the Space Ape UN-backed Green Game Jam for 2021. What can I do today? **[00:29:50]** How could I run my own green game jam? What tips would you give them?"

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**[00:29:54] Deborah:** To run their own jams? I mean, the nice thing is I think what we've seen from being

**[00:30:00]** more active in this space is that it really does start with just people caring, like individual people at companies caring. Sometimes yes, it comes from the top, like, in Space Ape's **[00:30:10]** case, we were super lucky that we had a CEO who thought this was worth it. That's not always gonna be the case. Sometimes you have to convince leadership. But I think that if you have **[00:30:20]** maybe at least two people within a studio who care, you can start to rally more people.

And even within Space Ape, you know, there were the three of us who originally **[00:30:30]** were really gung-ho about this. But now we have, you know, a larger channel where we talk about green initiatives, where there's like more than 20 people in now, so that stuff is infectious and it catches. **[00:30:40]** So if you're just starting out at your own studio, just grab a couple of people who are also interested and say, "Hey, what-what could we do?"

It doesn't have to be a massive thing, right? You can start **[00:30:50]** with something small. It can be the way that you design your next character, your next event. And it's also just about keeping this stuff front of mind **[00:31:00]** while you are designing for your games, right? And something that my friend Jake says, who works for Internet of Elephants who have this great conservation game called **[00:31:10]** Wildeverse. You know, he says, it's always just about choices, like, do you wanna make the choice for good? Or do you wanna ma-make the choice for-- I don't want to say evil, but we're **[00:31:20]** not good.

But it is just about those little daily choices. And I think as we're making games, there's always gonna be a choice. You know, are you gonna put that- like you said before, Dirk, are you gonna **[00:31:30]** put the car in your game that is, you know, polluting and terrible or are you gonna use an electric vehicle? Like, are your houses in your game gonna be covered in solar-powered roofs? **[00:31:40]** Like, you know, like, there's so many little things, I think, uh, and little choices that we can make when we're developing and sharing games.

I mean, I'd also like to encourage **[00:31:50]** people to join because it is open this year. Whereas the Green Game Jam this year was an invite-only, but next year because we-we just wanted to test-case it and prove-point **[00:32:00]** it and see if it was a thing that people wanted to do. Whereas next year, it is open. So there's going to be an open sign up for developers to take part. **[00:32:10]** And not just mobile, but also on console and PC, because this year, our goal originally was to reach 1 billion players, that turned into **[00:32:20]** 250 million, I think, for many reasons, one of them being the global pandemic.

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But for 2021, we definitely want to reach that 1 billion, and realistically, I think we're [00:32:30] probably gonna even surpass it. So we really want everybody on board.

[00:32:34] **Tamzin:** Super exciting. And where can people go to find out more about how to apply?

[00:32:38] **Deborah:** So that website that I mentioned [00:32:40] before, the Playing for the Planet one, then there's the link to the Green Game Jam, and, uh, there'll be a, uh, sign-up online as well. It's just gonna be like a Google Form [00:32:50] [laughs] that you guys can fill out and submit. I'm sure Google will share it as well so that it'll be easily accessible. And it's very simple, you know, just sort of registering [00:33:00] that you wanna commit to taking part.

[00:33:02] **Tamzin:** What are the long term goals beyond 1 billion? Do you see a future for more than the Green Game Jam? Is there more on the horizon for you?

[00:33:09] **Deborah:** Yeah, [00:33:10] I think definitely. The Game Jam has been just a really great flagship project for the Playing for the Planet Alliance. But it's so much bigger than that. [00:33:20] And I mean, the Game Jam was started by, you know, a few people and executed by a few people, uh, who brought in others.

So what I really wanna see is [00:33:30] just tons of these little projects spinning up out of the alliance, uh, where everybody can focus on, you know, something that they're passionate about, and then rally other people around that thing. [00:33:40] Like, it shouldn't always come from the same people, it shouldn't always come from the same place. There are a gazillion different ways that we can be engaging our players and using our industry for good. [00:33:50] So that's what I hope to see in the future.

[00:33:53] **Jennifer:** Here, here.

[00:33:53] **Tamzin:** Awesome. Thank you so much, Jennifer, and Deborah. It's been a pleasure having you on. And listening and-

[00:33:58] **Dirk:** It was a blast, really.

[00:33:59] **Tamzin:** -and learning all [00:34:00] about it.

[00:34:01] **Jennifer:** Thank you so much.

[00:34:02] **Deborah:** Thank you so much. Appreciate it.

[music]

[00:34:10] **Dirk:** [00:34:10] Thanks, Jennifer and Deborah, for joining us today and sharing your insights. And thank you to you too, our listeners, for tuning in. If you have any thoughts on topics covered of today's episode, [00:34:20] we'd love to hear from

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you. You can find us on Twitter at #GooglePlayDev. Keep an eye out and subscribe to our podcast. Until next time, keep playing **[00:34:30]** and learning.

[music] **[00:34:40]**

**[00:34:42] [END OF AUDIO]**