

KEYWORDS DELIVERS CONTINUOUS QA COVERAGE FOR AAA BATTLE ROYALE TITLE

Bespoke global workflow created for daily build validation

CHALLENGE

A decade ago, it was not uncommon for Functionality QA teams to receive new builds once or twice a week when working on a large AAA game. As developers choose to adopt the Games as a Service (GaaS) model and the gaming industry continues to evolve, more and more games are extending their lifespan.

Games such as League of Legends have demonstrated the monetization opportunity of the GaaS model. There is a huge player base ready and excited to purchase cosmetics and shop items.

However, all of these systems need to be thoroughly tested, and that can require specific upkeep and QA approach to manage successfully. Build delivery and daily testing efficiency are impacted by the shorter cadence between patches, which are necessary to support a live model and keep the player base engaged.

ADDRESSING INEFFICIENCIES

When it comes to QA, operating on old, outdated builds can hinder and impact workflows, block access to important new features, and cause unnecessary delays.

One of the most common pain points that the Keywords Functionality QA GaaS support model addresses is efficiency. Over the course of a partnership working on a AAA GaaS title, we noted that traditional QA was operating on 'stale' or older builds instead of what was currently available internally to our clients.

Due to the size of the build, long cook times, and being a multi-platform title (seven platforms in total), it took a substantial amount of effort and resources to validate the builds each day.

The Keywords team was typically operating on a build that was a day behind the current changelog. This approach was identified as being inefficient and was thus prioritised to be resolved.

CHALLENGES

In the rapid-paced environment that is working on a Game as a Service QA, being behind – even by a day – can be catastrophic to production. Here are some of the ways these pains can be felt:

01

Added Delays

Issues take longer to be verified by QA, extending the lifecycle of all new bugs in the database. This feeds into extra delays in cyclical regression.

02

False Positives

QA teams can waste time on submitting tickets that are false positives, such as issues that are 'already fixed in tomorrow's build'.

03

Impact on Players

Delays can cause an important patch date to be missed, or can delay highly anticipated new features. They can also create periods of crunch that can be detrimental to team morale.

KEYWORDS DELIVERS ALWAYS-ON QA COVERAGE FOR AAA BATTLE ROYALE TITLE

THE SOLUTION

Given that both the client and the GaaS QA team for this engagement are based in North America, Keywords was keen to address the challenge with a solution that would not adversely impact the operation, nor the quality of life for existing staff.

The team created a new, global workflow for build validation; collaborating with its sister studio in India. Having a global infrastructure and network of studios allowed Keywords to operate in different time zones to suit the client's needs.

In this case, the shift time lined up in such a way that India team would be able to perform smoke-checks over the period of time that would be "overnight" or "early morning" for the Montreal team.

A New Team

A dedicated seven-person build smoke team was created, based in India, on an overnight schedule. This complemented the Dev & QA teams in the Eastern Standard Time Zone.

Training & Set-Up

Staff were trained and brought up to speed on build delivery, reporting and how to run the test cases.

Future Proofing

A streamlined process was put in place to easily add additional platforms to daily build verification tests when next-gen consoles were released.

THE IMPACT

Not having access to the latest builds had previously contributed to increasing delays before we could begin testing new content or features or proceed with bug verifications. This was a chain-reaction, which had the capacity to impact not only development timelines and future milestones, but also the development and QA teams themselves.

However, as a result of the new, global workflow for build validation, by the time the client and Montreal QA teams arrived for morning shifts, the builds were ready for download. The builds had been confirmed and validated for testing needs, and all critical blocking issues had been flagged to the client.

3,000

Builds validated to date, with an average of 1,200 per year across nine platforms

400+

Critical build health-related issues found since 2018

3,480

Mitigated hours (per month) of testing stale content and build downtime

40,000

Test cases executed each month by the smoke team

PARTNERING WITH US

Keywords Functionality QA has the global network of studios and breadth of testing services and experience to meet your needs. We continue to expand both locally and internationally to better support our clients. If your team faces vendor issues or if you want to explore solutions to minimize disruption risks, we invite you to contact us. Are you ready to partner with us? Enter your details on [our website](#) to get a proposal.

ABOUT KEYWORDS STUDIOS

We are the leading technical and creative services provider for global video games and beyond. With locations in Asia, Australia, the Americas and Europe, we have a breadth and depth in multiple industry-leading service lines including Art, Game Development, Audio, Functionality QA, Localization, Localization QA, Player Support and Marketing Services. Working across all major platforms, in more than 50 different languages, Keywords Studios delivers support for its clients across the globe.