

Zynga seeks to harvest players with mobile FarmVille game

SAN FRANCISCO - Social games company Zynga released a version of the hit "FarmVille" game tailored for smartphones and tablets in the hope of reaping a bumper crop of new players.



Zynga has released a new version of FarmVille tailored to smartphones and tablet computers.
Image: Google

The San Francisco-based game maker set on its sights on shifting away from desktop computers to regain momentum with the mobile-format "Farmville 2: Country Escape" for iPhone, iPad and Android devices.

"Just as the original 'FarmVille' created a global phenomena when it launched, we expect the same from 'Country Escape,'" game general manager Jamie Davies told AFP while providing an early glimpse at the title.

The original "FarmVille" will mark its fifth anniversary in June. More than 400m people around the world have played the game, which has brought in more than a billion dollars in revenue for Zynga.

"FarmVille really put social gaming on the map," Davies said. "It has stood the test of time."

The new mobile version of the game was released globally in more than dozen languages.

Since tens of millions of people still play "FarmVille" with friends at Facebook, the mobile version connects back to the leading social network.

It also connects with Facebook rival Google+.

Mobile version

However, the mobile version of the game gives people the option of playing FarmVille without friends for the first time in the

franchise, according to Zynga vice president of games Jonathan Knight.

FarmVille is essentially what it sounds like, in that players feed livestock, nurture crops, craft goods and virtually tend to other aspects of country life.

"In the mobile version, we have added more ways for players to team up, help each other out and even compete," Davies said.

Zynga has made a priority of adapting games for lifestyles increasingly centered on smartphones and tablets. The new game takes advantage of touch-screen controls and play can be popped into a few spare moments during the day.

"We know people like to pull their phone out while in line at grocery store, fire up the game, quickly accomplish a goal and put the phone away again," Knight said.

Zynga in January bought mobile game and animation firm NaturalMotion for US\$527m in a fresh effort to improve its fortunes after struggling for the past year and more.

Chief executive Don Matrick said at the time that Zynga had in place a solid foundation for growth and was "excited" about moving into the mobile arena.

Matrick, who took over last year from co-founder Mark Pincus, said the company's Casino program with real-money gaming, and its Words With Friends game, were starting to deliver results.

Zynga rose to stardom by tailoring games for Facebook, but the two firms have grown apart as Facebook develops new revenue streams and Zynga seeks new consumers.

"We are really focused on growth and creating new users on mobile," Davies said.

The new game is free to play, but people can spend money to speed up progress or to buy special farming items. Players can also form virtual co-ops and help one another out.

"People will always love growing and nurturing and taking care of virtual living things," Davies said of the enduring appeal of FarmVille.

"The game is designed to be a place where our players can escape to for ever if they want to," he added.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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