AppQuantum

Idle Lumber Empire

Game Renaissance

After 2.5 Years in Operation

How did the publisher help Idle Lumber Empire reach new heights after 2.5 years, defying the inevitable decline faced by all competing games of the same genre?

Idle Lumber Empire had been successful in LiveOps for one year when a gradual drop in its performance began, which is typical for the genre. Six months later, the decline became rapid, signaling what seemed like the end of its lifespan.

However, thanks to the combined efforts of our team and the publisher, who devised a comprehensive plan, Idle Lumber Empire managed to reverse this trend and achieve even higher results, creating an unprecedented case in the Idle Tycoon niche.

— Ngo Duc Hiep, CEO, NoPowerup

Idle Lumber Empire

Idle Lumber Empire is an Idle Tycoon game where players begin by running a small sawmill, striving to manage and expand their factory to build their own lumber empire. The game's addictive gameplay, combined with the marketing expertise, has been pivotal to the success of this project.

After a year of successfully operating Idle Lumber Empire, the game faced serious challenges in its performance. To address these problems, the publisher developed an emergency plan that **doubled monthly downloads, increased spending by 2.5 times, and nearly doubled monthly revenue**.

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

Game and Genre Background

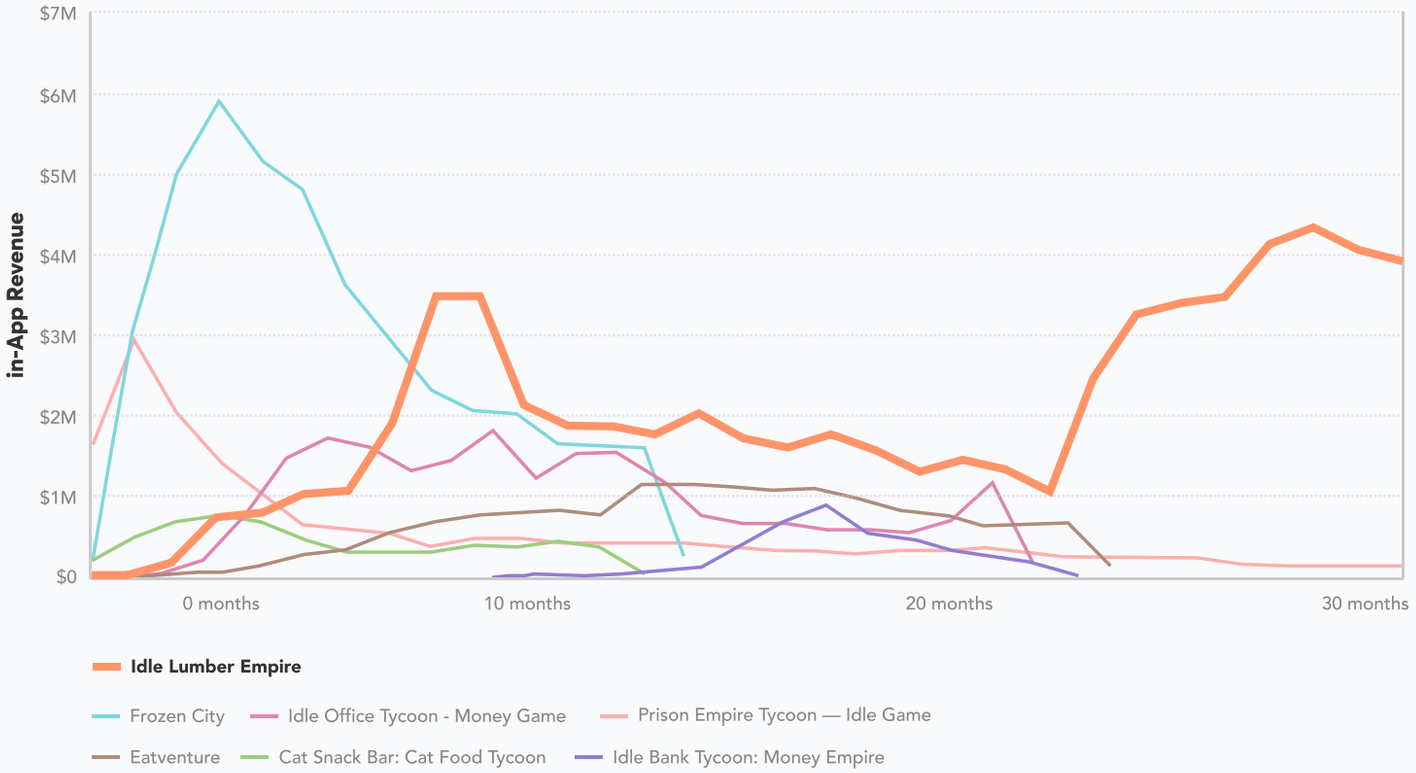
Idle Tycoon Games

Low CPI	Simple, reward-based progression system
High potential for scalability	Designed to keep players engaged over extended periods
Engaging gameplay, effectively conveyed through creative content	3-6 months of relatively high user LTV

This genre is easy to launch but challenging to sustain. Most Idle Tycoon games experience a rapid surge in popularity during the global launch phase, followed by a steady decline within 1 to 1.5 years after launch. The graph below shows the lifetime monthly downloads of Idle Lumber Empire's competitors, displaying the genre trend discussed earlier:

Competitors' in-App Revenue

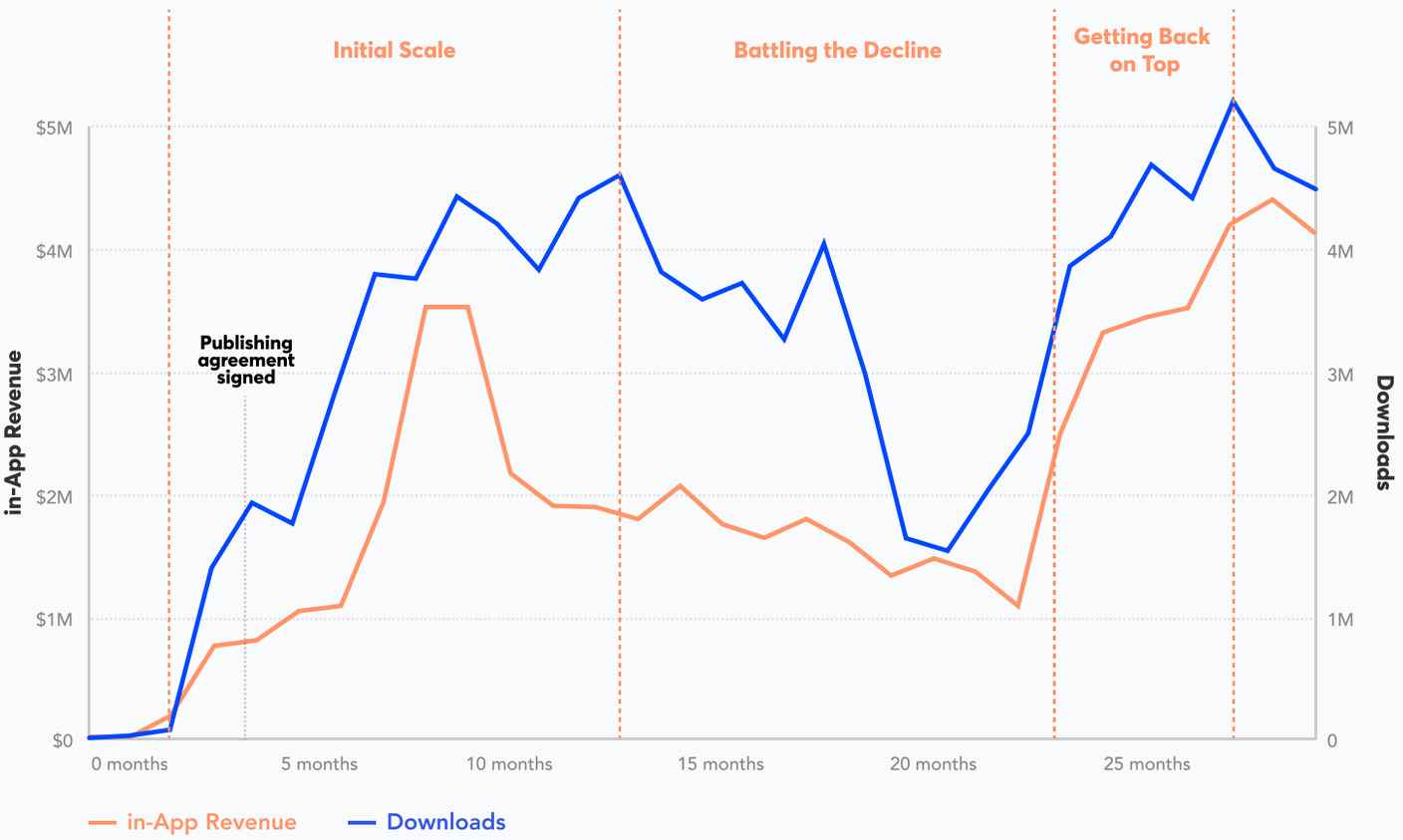
- All Countries/Regions - Monthly



All of the competitors have experienced such declines, but none have successfully reversed this trend. **However, the publisher managed to do so with Idle Lumber Empire**.

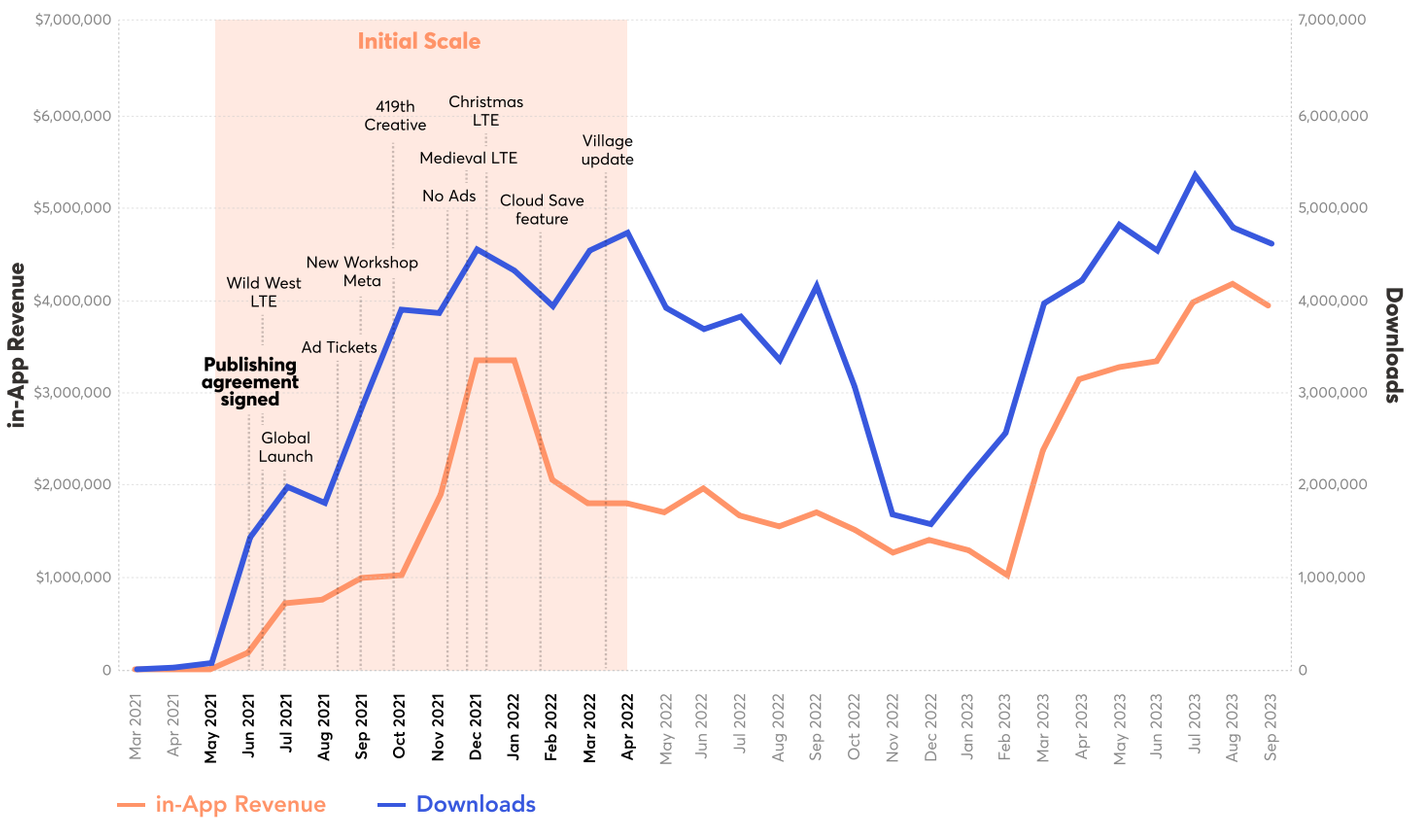
Idle Lumber Empire

- All Countries/Regions - Monthly



Initial Scale

May 2021 - April 2022



During the launch and initial scaling stage, the main publisher's focus was to increase players' LTV by adding meta features, secure good financial KPIs through enhancing and polishing monetization, and successfully scale the product.

These steps secured both high downloads and revenue, making Idle Lumber Empire one of the Top-3 Idle Tycoon games at that time.

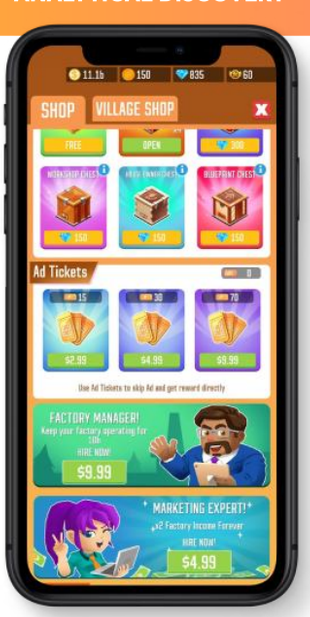
Reworked Ads and In-Apps to enhance the monetization:

BEST PRACTICES + ANALYTICAL DISCOVERY

No Ads

+70.4%
iAP Conversion Rate

+113.7%
cARPU iAP, D4



Ad-Tickets

+23.1%
cARPU, D7

+33.3%
iAP Conversion Rate, D3

Launched LTEs and added the Managers feature:

IN-HOUSE R&D

Wild West LTE

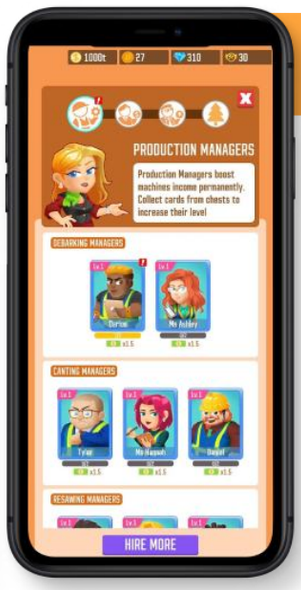
+111.1%

cARPU, D14

Christmas

IN-HOUSE R&D

Managers



IN-HOUSE R&D

Introduced the Workshop feature to improve meta gameplay:

IN-HOUSE R&D

+16.7%

Retention Rate, D7

+133.3%

Retention Rate, D14

+30.8%

cARPU iAP, D14

+7

features

Battling the Decline

April 2022 - End of February 2023

After its first year of operation, Idle Lumber Empire experienced a significant decline in performance, which is typical for the genre.

Reasons:

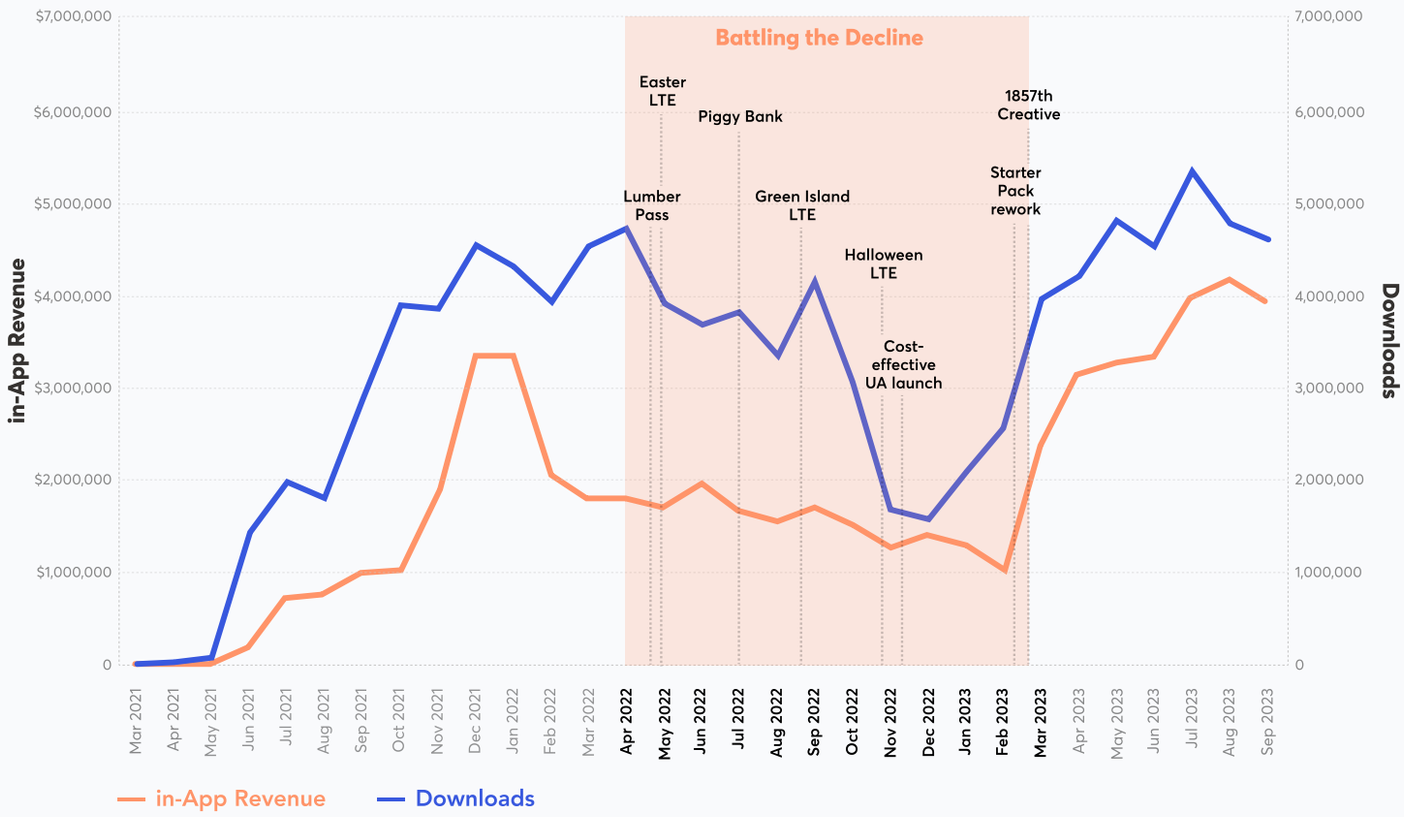
- The initial scaling was followed by a rising CPI, complicating new audience acquisition.
- The paying user segment, showed limited potential for increasing spending over time.
- The waning interest in old ad concepts, negatively impacted UA performance.

All these factors contributed to a significant drop in behavioral, product, and marketing metrics.

The decline led to:

-66%
Monthly Downloads

-58.2%
Monthly Revenue



To combat the decline, the publisher started working on a complex emergency response plan. After conducting in-depth research and cross-team brainstorming sessions, the plan was ready.

What was the plan?

- Improve Idle Lumber Empire's product metrics
- Utilize real-time dashboards for performance tracking
- Switch to a cost-effective UA strategy
- Discover new successful ad creative concepts
- Implement a continuous research process to further elevate the game

Uplifting the LTV

As Idle Lumber Empire had been in LiveOps for a year, it already had most of its monetization features implemented. It was necessary to delve deeply into the data to identify opportunities for tweaking existing features to generate even more revenue.

But, **these tweaks wouldn't show results right away**. So, integrating them ASAP was crucial to allow sufficient time for their full potential to unfold.

Lumber Pass and its polishing

BEST PRACTICES + ANALYTICAL DISCOVERY

+45%

+35%

Diamonds bundles purchases

+48%

Materials bundles purchases

up to +127%

New players ARPWAU,

+50%

+60%

Old players ARPWAU

Green Island LTE

Piggy Bank

ANALYTICAL DISCOVERY

+30-40%
AVPU

+40%
+15%
AARPU

+30%
+10%
Average amount of IAPs per user

BEST PRACTICES

Top-3
iAP Conversion Rate

Lumber Pass adjustments

ANALYTICAL DISCOVERY

+13%
+3%
iAP Conversion Rate, D14

Starter Pack rework

ANALYTICAL DISCOVERY

+27.2%
+15.12%
iAP Conversion Rate, D3

+12
features

Cost-Effective UA Strategy

During the decline phase, it was necessary to cut costs to ensure sufficient profitability.

Meanwhile, UA efforts needed to guarantee enough downloads for creative and product tests. So, the strategy was fine-tuned to meet current needs, and the publisher's marketing team dived into the following techniques:

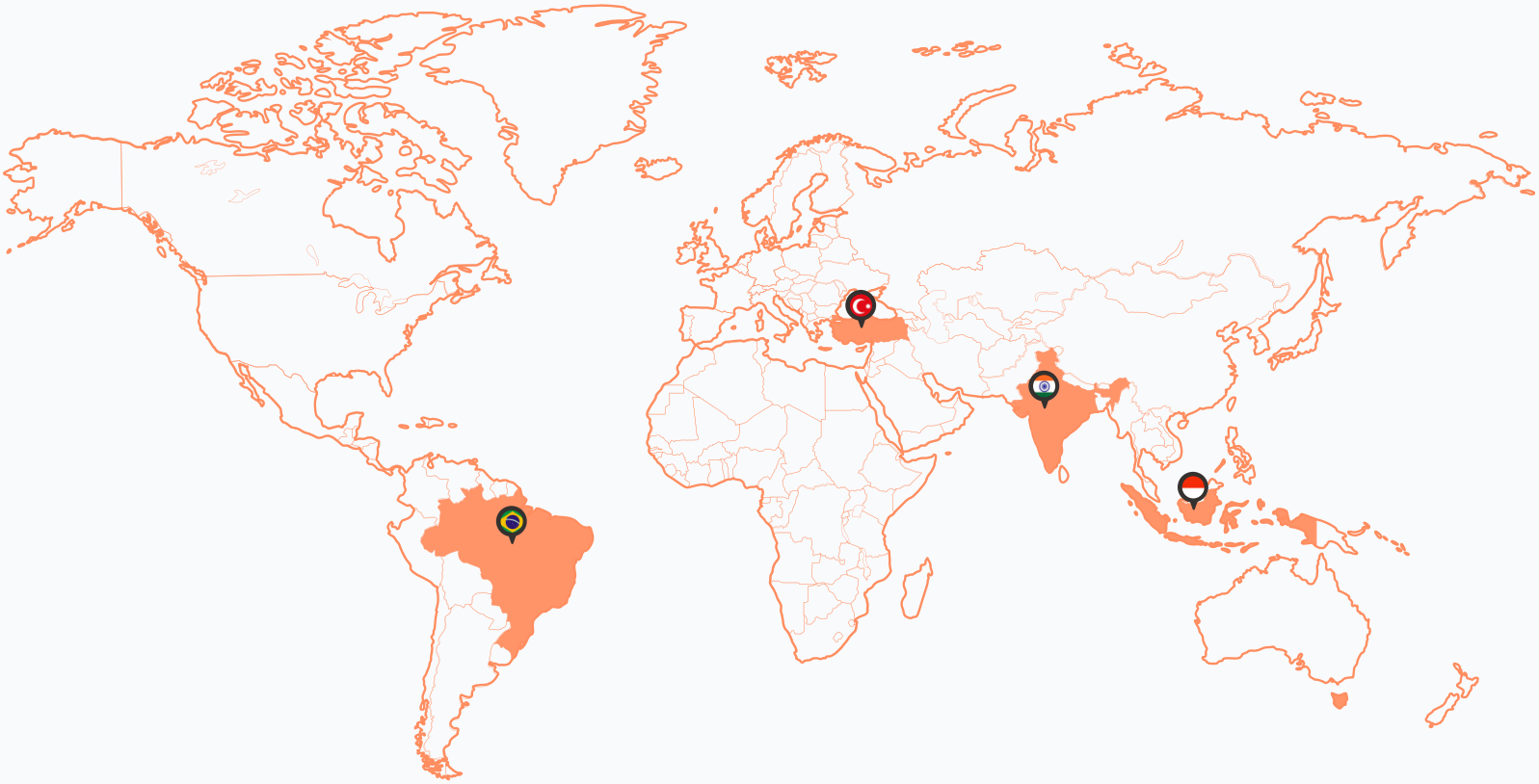
- Prioritized targeting Tier 3 countries.
- Chose to diverge from standard campaign operating approaches, focusing on improving inter-team communication.
- Carried out numerous research studies from the UA perspective, pinpointing growth opportunities in every source.

- Consistently leveraged over 50 real-time dashboards to monitor performance.

Top Traffic Sources (+):

Meta APPLOVIN Google Ads TikTok Ads unity ADS

Top GEOs for the Cost-Effective UA Strategy



Creatives

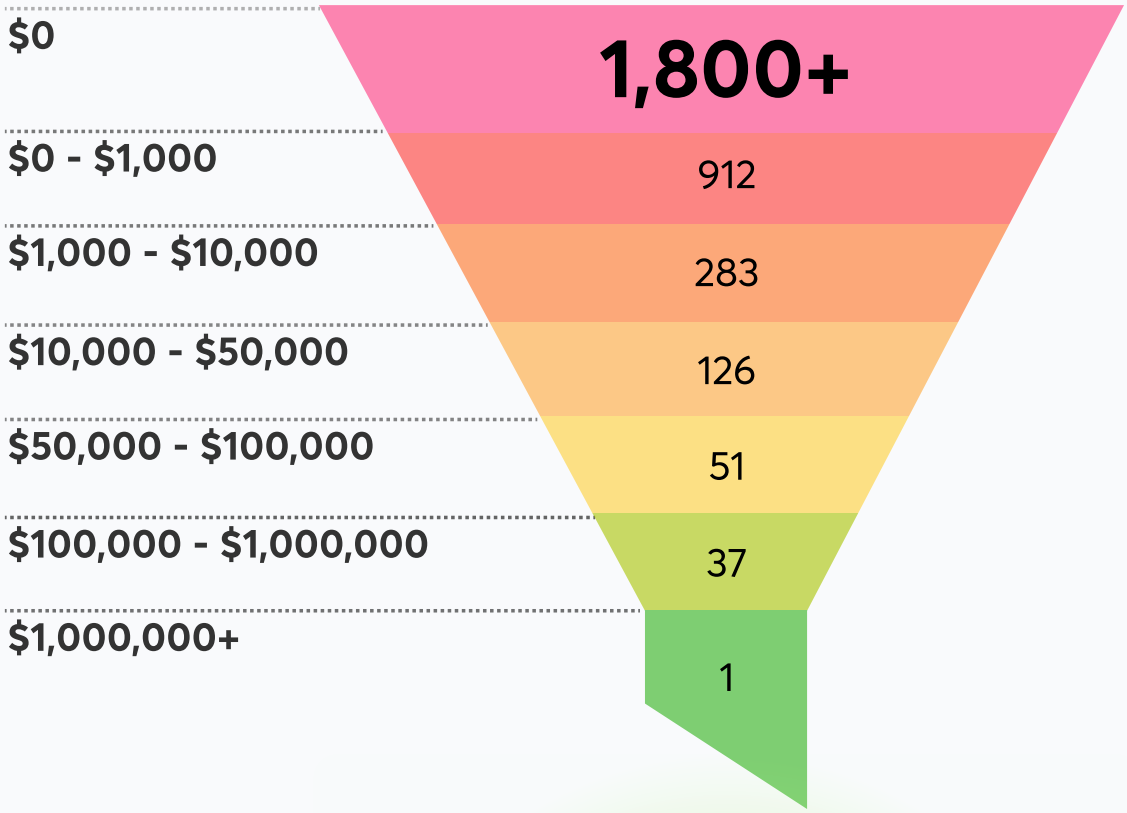
Creatives are one of the main drivers of successful project scaling. An increased ARPU and LTV alone wouldn't suffice, so it was important to consistently prepare a large volume of creatives each month in the search for the next hit concept.

The publisher maintained production values even during the period of decline, as it was crucial to continue the search for a hit concept in line with the Creative Funnel.

During the Battling the Decline period (April 2022 - end of February 2023), the publisher developed:

UA campaigns spend:

Creatives

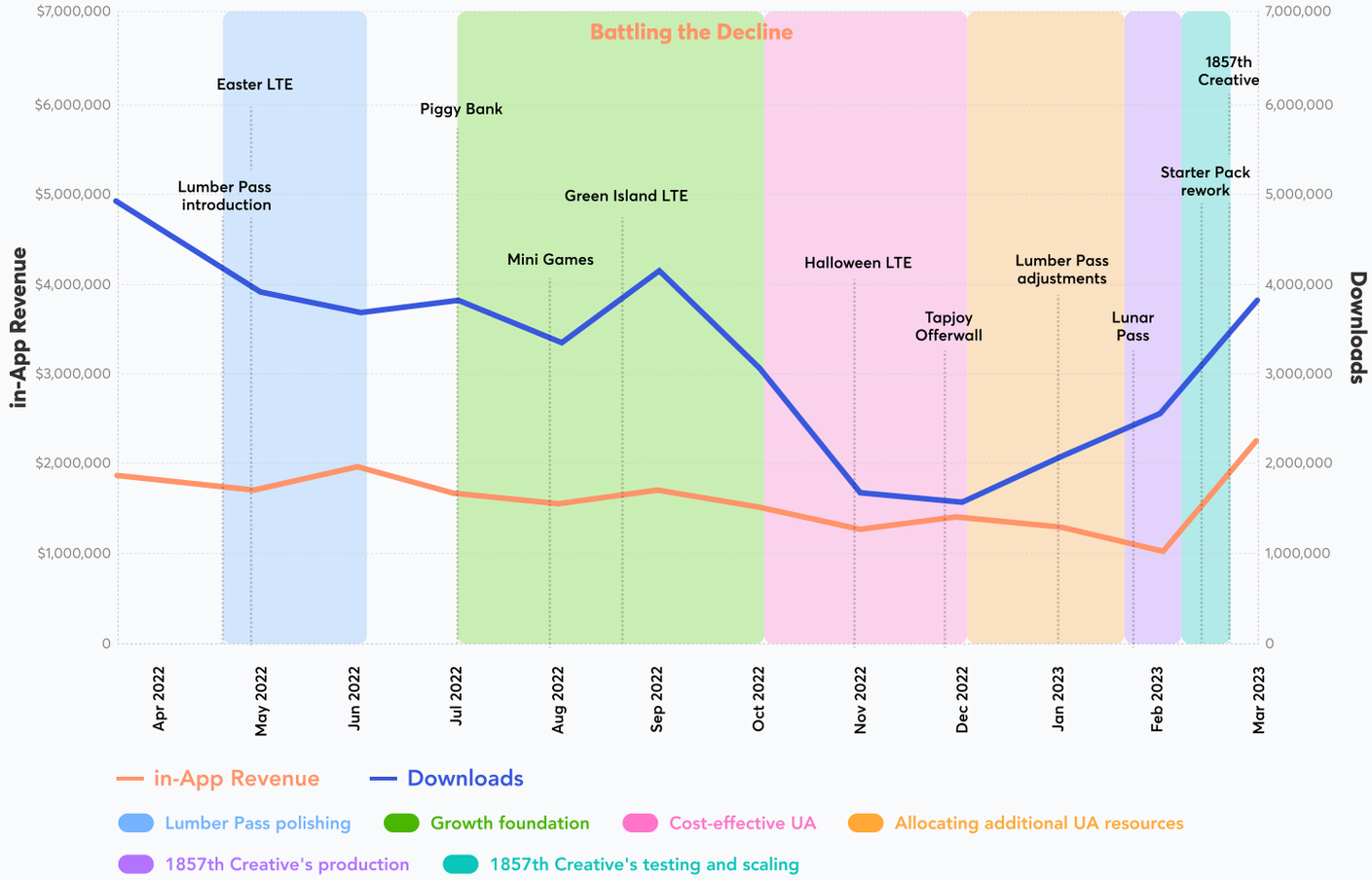


1857th Creative

$3,300,000+

UA campaigns spend

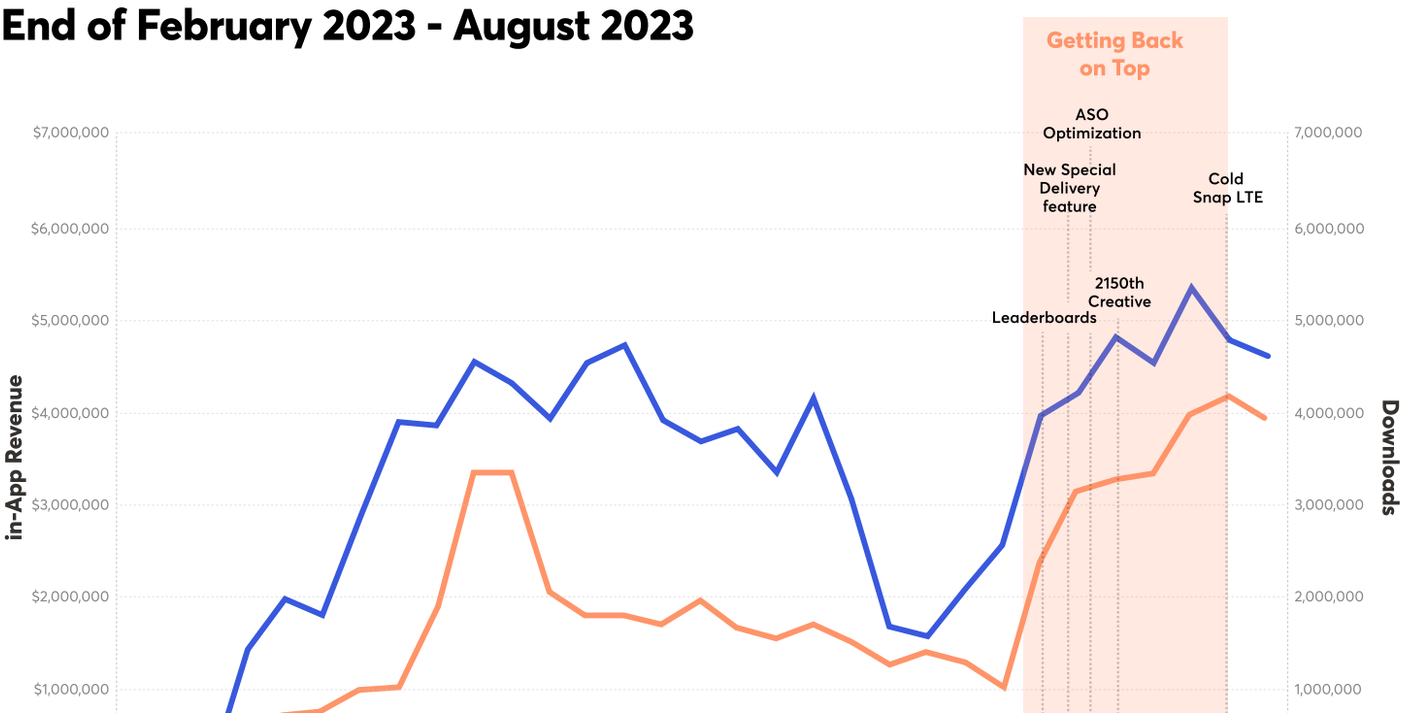
Period Overview



After reversing the trend, the combined team of the publisher and the game developer set a new goal: to reach new heights with the product.

Getting Back on Top

End of February 2023 - August 2023



Product

The introduction of new features in Idle Lumber Empire has led to a significant increase in both downloads and revenue, **surpassing the figures achieved during the Initial Scaling period**.

Leaderboards

BEST PRACTICES

+15-20%
ARPDAU

Cold Snap LTE

BEST PRACTICES

+24%
ARPDAU vs Beach LTE

+21%
ARPDAU vs Medieval LTE

New Special Delivery feature

REWORKED
EVENT FEATURE

+2-3%
iAA LTV

+5
features

Creatives

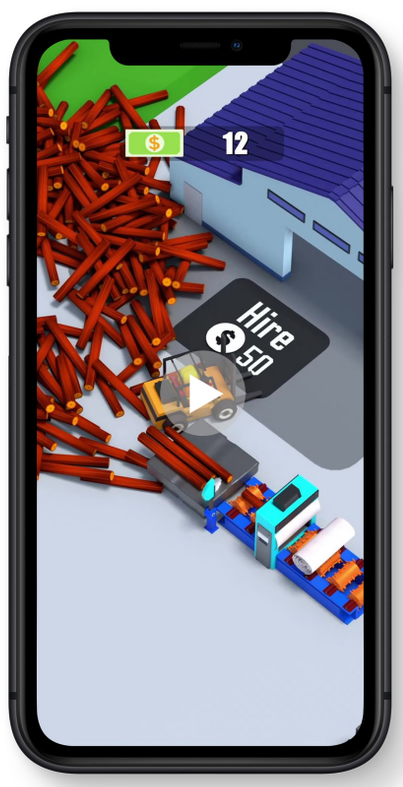
The publisher's marketing team never stops after the first successful creative. They persistently seek new ideas and concepts to further enhance success, considering all previous experience, well-performing ads from the market, and new product features.

3,500+*

Creatives were developed for Idle Lumber Empire since the first tests

*May 2021 - July 2023

Thanks to these efforts, another promising creative emerged by May 2023:



2150th Creative

$2,200,000+

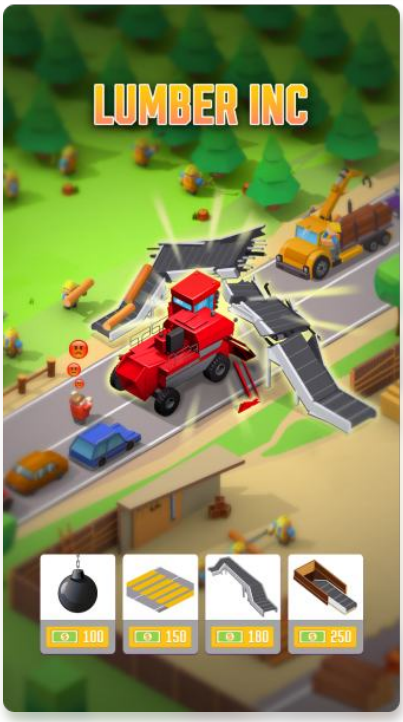
UA campaigns spend

Also, the publisher's marketing team strived to produce all kinds of creatives for Idle Lumber Empire to reach all possible target audiences:

2D

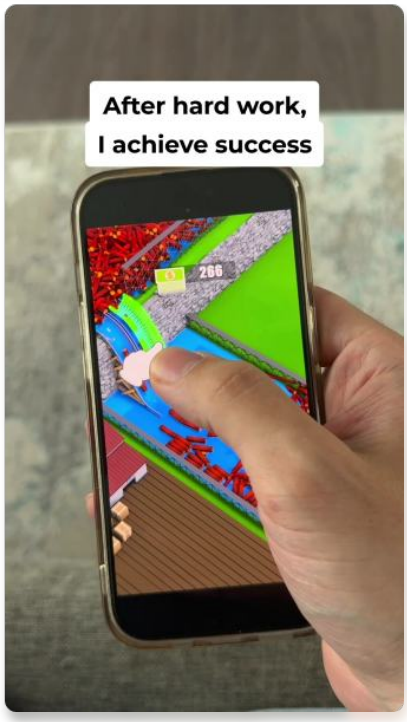
3D

Playable Ads



Static

Combining several concepts



UGC

User Acquisition

When Idle Lumber Empire's new creatives showed potential in tests and product KPIs began improving, it was crucial to swiftly shift the marketing team's focus to scaling the new ad concepts and UA campaigns.

Result:

×2.5

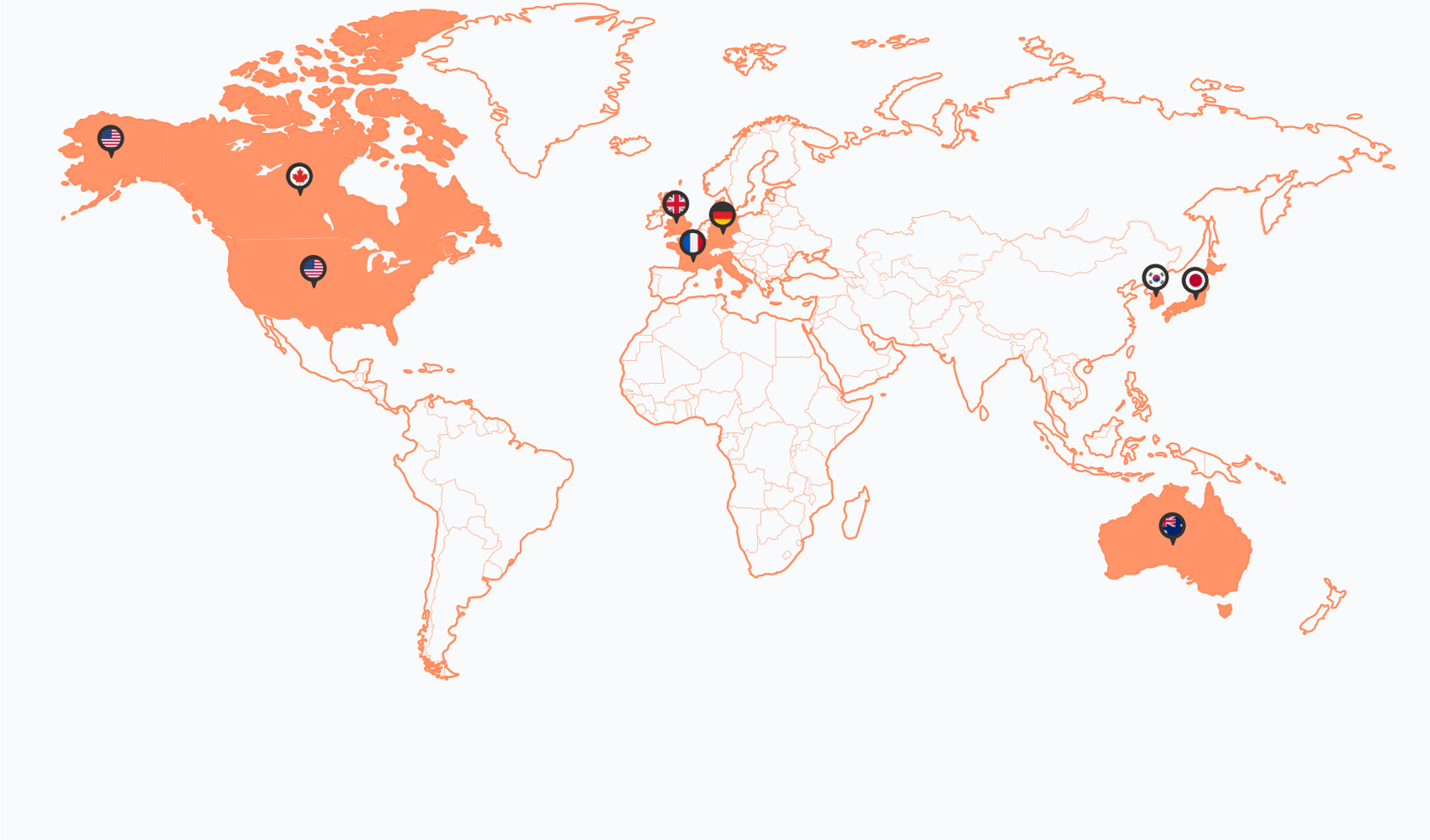
UA campaigns spend

compared to the Decline Period

Top Traffic Sources (+):

Meta · APPLOVIN · Google Ads · TikTok Ads · MOLOCO · + 17 others

Top GEOs for Scaling Phase



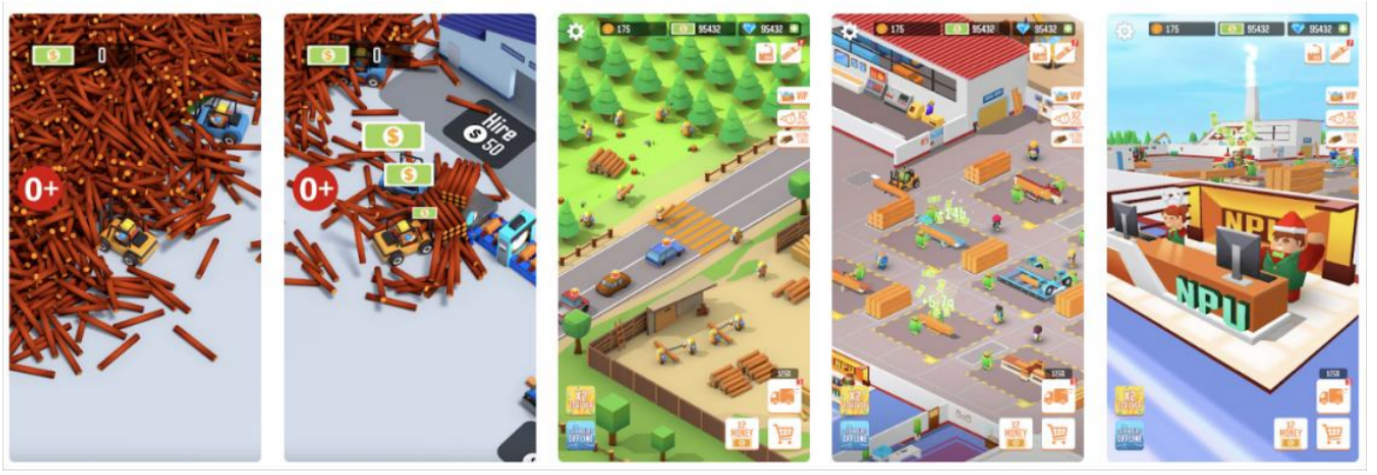
ASO

The publisher's ASO team was a powerhouse in driving organic traffic at every stage. They leveraged every in-game event and update to secure optimal in-store page performance, especially during periods of reduced UA spend. As soon as a new hit creative concept emerged, they optimized the stores to ensure maximum conversion efficiency.

App Icons

Screenshots in App Stores

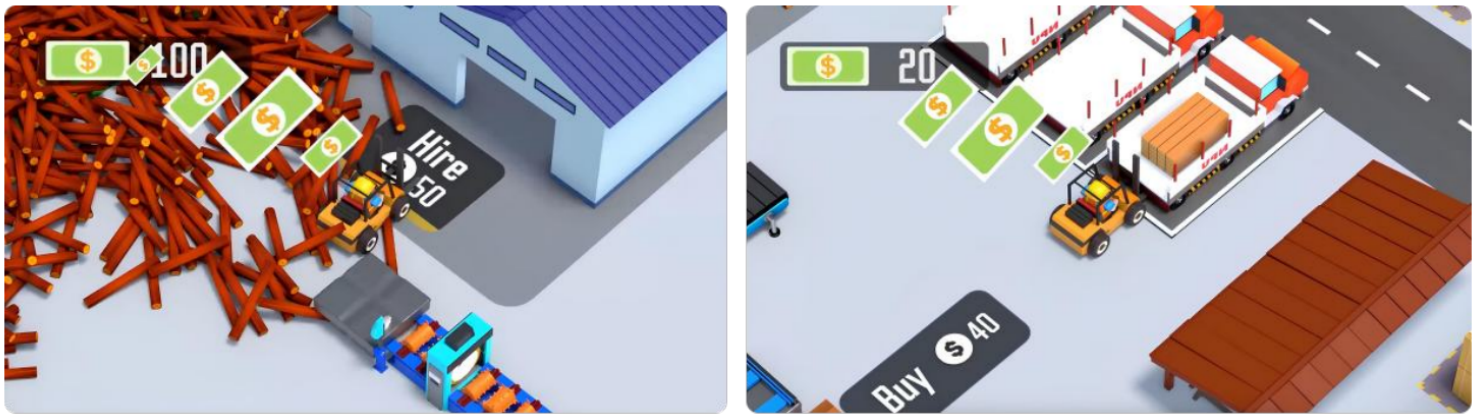
Gallery with the screenshots from the 1857th Creative:

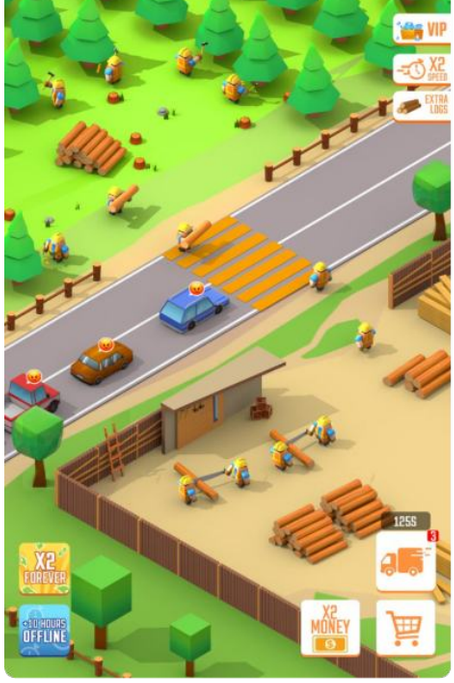


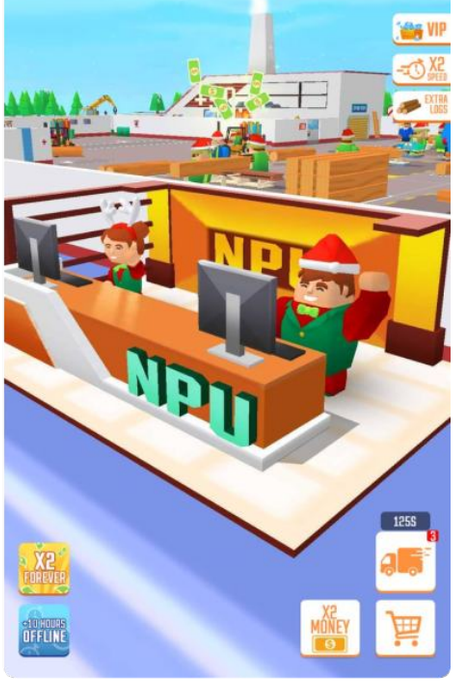
+8.9%
Conversion, March 2023

+9.5%
Retention Rate, D1, March 2023

Changed the order of the pictures and their orientation in the gallery with the screenshots from the 1857th Creative:







+17%
Conversion, April 2023

+19%
Retention Rate, D1, April 2023

Main Takeaways

To fight the product's decline it is inevitable to:

1. Enhance product metrics, including LTV, by fine-tuning existing features to secure additional income.
2. Utilize a custom-built, real-time analytical system that integrates product and marketing data, enabling precise, data-driven decision-making.
3. Make timely adjustments to the UA strategy, allowing for cost reductions during periods of decline and immediate scaling when possible.
4. Develop a creative production funnel that facilitates the production of numerous creatives to discover the hit concept.
5. Prepare to navigate months of decline and support the team throughout.

These steps helped the publisher achieve even better monthly

revenue and downloads for Idle Lumber Empire than the game had before the decline.

Results

compared to Idle Lumber Empire's decline

+236%
Monthly Downloads

+184.2%
Monthly Revenue

+90.9%
Total ARPU

+133.3%
iAP ACPU

+47.2%
iAP ARPPU

+90.1%
iAP CR

×2.5
UA campaigns spend

Contact us!

This is a great example of how teamwork between a game developer and a publisher can identify growth areas in a project that seemed unlikely to bounce back to its old metrics, let alone exceed its historical peak.

Do you have a mobile game or a studio and are you looking for proven product expertise or investments?

Drop us a line!

We will find plenty of opportunities for our collaboration!

Get started

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