

# HALO<sup>1</sup> (Highly Addictive, socialLly Optimized) Software Engineering

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1. There is no connection between our proposal and any games with similar names. The authors have no affiliations with any companies involved in producing such games... except as customers.















# HALO Software Engineering

- These games mirror the competitive-collaborative nature of SE
- We propose a new approach to Software Engineering called HALO (Highly Addictive, socialLly Optimized)
- Use the benefits of gamification to aid the SE process
- Originally proposed by Jim Whitehead in his roadmap for collaboration in SE (2007)

# Background:

# Behavioral Psychology

- Operant Conditioning
  - Rewarding participants for good behavior
- Flow
  - Single-minded immersion
- Applications to games
- Jane McGonigal's Blissful Productivity
  - Gamers are happier working to beat a game than relaxing



# HALO Game Mechanics

- HALO represents SE tasks as quests
  - ▀ Simple: closing a bug
  - ▀ Complex: porting the code to a different OS or platform
  - ▀ E.g., give basic training to a new intern and introduce him to artifacts like code repositories and bug report systems
- Create parties for difficult quests - this would highlight the collaborative nature of SE
  - ▀ E.g., create a party of developers covering the several kinds of expertise needed to internationalize the code for a new region
- Quests can be chained into series of quests - an analog for representing the multiple steps with intermediate deliverables for complicated use cases or bug fixes, or daily build/test processes



# HALO Game Mechanics (2)

- Quests can be created in HALO during the initial planning stages for SE projects
- New quests and quest series can be added on the fly, as needed
- Doesn't have to follow the MMORPG concepts strictly - concepts from other games or familiar to conventional SE like priorities and deadlines can be added

# Blissful Productivity in HALO

- Operant Conditioning
  - Social in-game rewards such as titles, leveling
  - Currency points could map to real life - better parking spaces, free lunch, gift cards
  - Could be used to provide metrics for existing programs such as “Employee of the Month”
  - Rewards scaled with time in game (becoming less common but more valuable); larger rewards for more difficult tasks and collaborating with others
- Flow Theory
  - Clear Goals, Concentration, Loss of self-consciousness, Direct feedback, Balance of ability and challenge



# HALO Software

## Development Environment

- IDE plugin that would communicate with users and keep track of progress and achievements
- Task sensitive and context sensitive for integration with the SE lifecycle
- Initially text based, although could become 3D
- HALO would need an automated way for figuring out when quests have been completed
  - Examples: running a unit or regression test, triggered by events such as code check-ins, statically analyzing the code, explicit feedback from users

# Related Work

- CHIME (1999)
  - Immersive VR for collaborative SE
  - Allowed users to walk around in a 3D world and interact with SE artifacts such as code files, bug reports, and email archives
  - Focused on the artifacts of SE, rather than tasks; HALO focuses on the latter
- MARVEL (1987) and Oz (1993)
  - Automated software workflow for team software development later extended to geographically distributed teams and a web-based GUI



# Related Work (2)

- SE education games - Software Hut (1977), SimSE (2004), Card Game (2005)
  - SimSE was designed a single-player game - no multiplayer features
  - Software Hut and Card Game are primarily competitive games - limited or no collaborative aspects
  - All games focused towards teaching SE in a classroom - not intended for “real-world” SE
  - Professional SE is usually done collaboratively in teams and this is our focus
- Collaborative games for science education - DinoQuest (2008)
  - These games focus on general science education, not SE

# Research Agenda

- Mapping of different SE processes and methodologies to games
  - Should the Agile methodology and the Waterfall model have the same game mechanics?
  - If there is Global Software Development, do we need different game mechanics?
- Building game engines for software development
  - Would these be similar to the traditional game engines?
  - What would be the software architectures and design patterns for these games engines?



# Research Agenda (2)

- Quest design
  - How can quests be created so they are satisfying and engaging?
  - What kind of quest templates do we need for SE?
  - How can existing systems like bug tracking be integrated into HALO?
- Evaluation of games like HALO
  - Do we need new methodologies?

# Conclusion

- New approach to SE called HALO (Highly Addictive, sociaLly Optimized)
- Builds upon properties of popular online collaborative games
- Described the game mechanics of HALO and how it would fit into typical SE processes
- Highlighted some of the future research challenges

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# Photo Attribution

- Dunechaser (Flickr)
- <http://joshynet.wordpress.com/>
- <http://www.cod4central.com/>



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