

Web Courseworks Releases 'Distraction Dodger' Into the Wild!

Web Courseworks has released 'Distraction Dodger,' a serious online game developed for the University of Minnesota's ITS Institute to address the issue of distracted driving. Designed to educate teens worldwide on the importance of concentrating while driving, the game has been released publicly to the online casual games market. 'Distraction Dodger' is a scenario based online game that enables players to safely experience and learn about consequences associated with distracted driving. (<http://www.its.umn.edu/DistractionDodger/game/>)

October 28, 2011

The University of Minnesota's Intelligent Transportation Systems Institute (ITS) and Web Courseworks Ltd. have released '[Distraction Dodger](#)' to the world's most popular casual game sites including Kongregate, Newgrounds, and Mochimedia. Using traditional game mechanics, 'Distraction Dodger' was designed to teach the importance of concentration while driving by illustrating how much a distraction can impact performance. The ITS Institute and Web Courseworks are leveraging the opportunity to expose 'Distraction Dodger' and its valuable message to the estimated 200 million casual gamers online each month, as reported by the Casual Games Association.

Named a Bronze Medal Winner at the 2011 International Serious Play Awards, 'Distraction Dodger' challenges game players to efficiently accomplish game tasks while avoiding common distractions on the road. During game play, players aim to become the most successful of all of the pizza vehicles in the town of Little Moots by being the fastest pizza delivery service while also being the safest on the road. Balancing phone calls, street navigation, eating, waving to friends, and battling giant flies outside the vehicle are all potential hazards.

The game is founded on the research of cognitive psychologists with the HumanFIRST Program at ITS. Experiments based on researcher hypotheses and theories help identify ways to help people drive more safely. In the game, players become better at accomplishing tasks as they advance through the levels, but also become more distracted. Reviewing driving behaviors at the end of each level and learning the consequences of distracter temptations demonstrates the importance of putting safety first while on the road.

"We anticipate an extremely strong response, not only because of the game's high profile theme, but also the success of ITS's preceding serious game '[Gridlock Busters](#),'" says Jon Aleckson, president of Web Courseworks Ltd. Released in late 2009, 'Gridlock Busters,' a traffic control simulation game, has received over 3 million plays to date.

[Clark Aldrich](#), renowned practitioner of building games and simulations for education and professional skills was a consulting developer on both 'Distraction Dodger' and 'Gridlock Busters.' Aldrich contends that computer games represent new, "post-linear" models for capturing and representing content, but that new computer game genres will have to be created, optimized for learning as well as entertainment.

Recently reported statistics by the US Department of Transportation show that drivers under age 20 are the most likely age group to attribute a fatal crash to their distracted driving. Distractions like cell phones delay a driver's reaction time as much as having a blood alcohol



content (BAC) of the legal limit of 0.08 percent. Efforts of the researchers with the HumanFIRST Program at ITS will have a positive impact on reducing the rate of injuries and fatal crashes.

Web Courseworks is a full-service provider of solutions for electronic education, offering custom development of high-end serious games and simulations, rapid development of tutorial-style asynchronous eCourses, and other hosted software solutions. Creative acknowledgements for 'Distraction Dodger' go to Jaime Henderson (Lead Designer) and Asia Comeau (Lead Programmer) at Web Courseworks.

For links to other Web Courseworks serious games, visit <http://www.webcourseworks.com/custom-learning/games-and-simulations/overview>

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