

Play This Game, Get That Job

By Wired: Gamellife | Plugged In -- Tue, Jul 23, 2013 12:53 PM EDT

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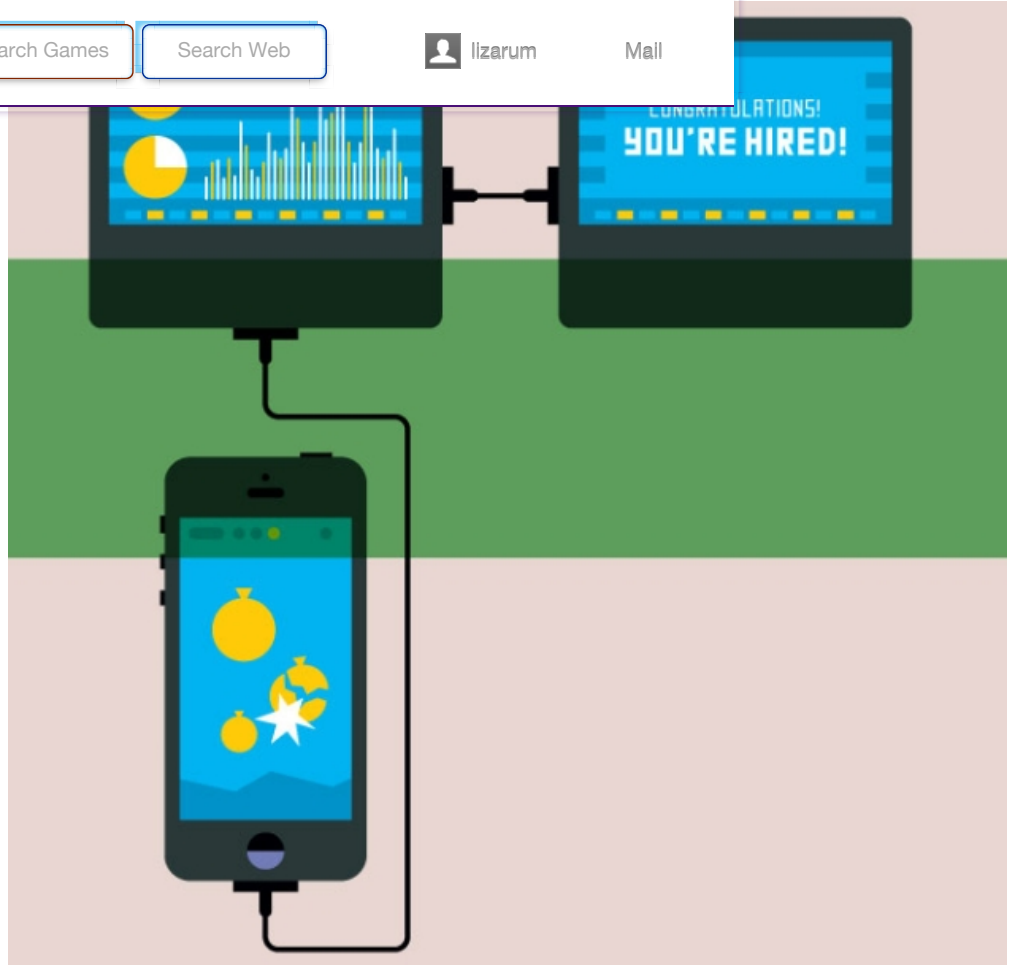
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Brigade, I got whaled on so hard that I could feel my future job prospects evaporating. That's because the mobile game, which hits the App Store in July, is part of a wave of career-aptitude analyses being offered by Knack. The company promises to hack the hiring process -- along with other weighty work, school, and social decisions you might face -- by using gaming to map and measure your intangible strengths.

Knack was founded in 2010 by Guy Halfteck, an entrepreneur who'd recently been passed up for a hedge fund job that relied on the usual questionnaire-and-interview process. He was so irked that he hired a team of psychologists, neuroscientists, and videogame designers to come up with an alternative capable of gauging your strategic thinking, creative insights, and performance under pressure.



(Illustration: L-Dopa)

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Some gamers play to win fast, others to explore, or to rack up points, or simply to stay alive. Knack tracks all that, using its proprietary formula that identifies talents from gameplay behavior and personality traits and captures how your reactions shift as the pressure increases.

To that end, *Balloon Brigade* is like *Angry Birds* but more frenetic. Your goal is to fill and launch colorful water balloons at a legion of fiery invaders, who cross varied terrain to dismantle your contraption. Balloons of different colors have different tensile strengths, requiring quick judgments about how much to fill and where to launch—all of which gets counted and funneled into the game's patented data algorithms. "We measure everything imaginable and unimaginable," Halfteck says. In other words, your score doesn't matter as much as the way you achieve it.

My problem: half-assing it. After a few balloons popped, I opted to low-fill everything. Eventually I learned to set traps, pooling water in low-lying dunes to slow down onslaughts. As I advanced more quickly through levels and avoided hits, my scores went up, but I never learned if a few well-placed hits can stop the madness entirely. Because the game has a social

networking component that lets players compare scores or promote their “knacks” to companies, gamers who figure out those things might be rewarded. Shell and NYU have already used Knack games for their own talent searches. I don’t expect a recruiter to call anytime soon. I hit the pause button a lot to rethink strategy. My top personality trait: High Risk Aversion.

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