

miniMonsters™ Go!

A Pentex success story



By Adrian BK

Black Dog Games Factory hadn't adapted particularly well to the twenty-first century. Using outdated business models and a heavy reliance on print distribution, this Pentex subsidiary was starting to lose market share. The 1990's were the boom-time for the company as they produced gaming products that were described as 'edgy', 'confronting', and 'disturbed', but the rise of the MMORPG dethroned this gaming giant.

In recent years, as other companies have sought toy deals, movie rights (secured by *Omni Television*¹), and comic series, *Black Dog* explored mobile app games instead. In part, this was due to a small group of developers on the team who spent their increasing free time playing on their phones, but also a survival instinct. Upper management were well aware of Pentex 'restructures', 'severance packages', and 'redeployment opportunities' and had no desire to leave the gaming company.

The success of *miniMonsters™ Go!* was completely unanticipated. At first, the designers only thought to

produce a game that superficially offered potential social benefits, but subtly reinforced apathy toward violence and the natural world.

Public acceptance

The belief in a supernatural source of evil is not necessary; men alone are quite capable of every wickedness.

Joseph Conrad

The major media focus on the app has spoken about health benefits as people leave their homes, explore their city, and potentially socialise with other *miniMonster™ Explorers* (as they are referred to in the game). The premise of the app is that scattered across the world are a number of cute and friendly monsters that are collected by participants who travel to locations in their city. Once collected, the creatures are cared for, and engage in friendly duels with other Explorers. When players have collected too many *miniMonsters™* they can either trade with fellow Explorers or send them to the '*miniMonster™ Reserve*' a fictional virtual location staffed by scientists who are investigating the *miniMonster™* phenomenon. In game purchases allow Explorers to purchase costumes and accessories for their

¹ See *Subsidiaries: A Guide to Pentex*

menagerie and create a secondary revenue stream for Black Dog.

Public ~~deception~~ reception

*Are these things really better than the things I already have?
Or am I just trained to be dissatisfied with what I have now?*

Chuck Palahniuk, *Lullaby*

The hidden agenda is far worse. The core principles of the game normalise animal hunting and capture, reinforce that domesticating wild animals is 'right', and also build a blind acceptance of animal gladiatorial combat and scientific experimentation on animals. In the physical world, other Pentex subsidiaries have been quick to embrace the craze.

O'Tooley's² now offers free wifi to customers and pays Black Dog to populate their fast food outlets with rare miniMonsters™. King Breweries and Distillers³ has already arranged a series of 'miniMonster™ Pub Crawls' that combine over-indulgence in alcohol with monster hunting.

Telecommunications companies under the influence of Pentex have begun to market phone plans specifically designed to accommodate Explorers.

Black Dog has moved swiftly from an inside joke to a major financial stakeholder. There are also market testers seeding rumours of an R 18+ version of the game that offers scarier monsters and more 'realistic combat for the discerning adult user'.

Human exploitation is at the heart of the app. The development of the game, as well as expansions and updates are outsourced to minimum wage off-shore coders who will never see a cent of the additional revenue. The coders are deliberately compartmentalised so that no group has enough

information to launch a rivalrous version of the game, and upper management has encouraged a healthy level of competition among the employees – even going so far as to state that bidding for coding jobs will be predicated on their 'level' in the app. They reason that it's not worth paying people who are invested in the company culture, meaning that these wage slaves spend most of their personal time using the app to improve their level to bid for more minimum wage work.

Even those not connected to the company have worked out ways to use technology to take advantage of their fellow man. False signals have led some

Explorers into muggings, beatings, and worse – all for the sake of capturing virtual monsters.

Mobile phone theft is rising (and with it an increase in identity theft); whilst MeTube streams user-created videos of random cruelty to Explorers to a growing audience. Recent videos showing Explorers frantically trying to climb a greased ledge to capture a miniMonster™ and many that place objects (like skateboards) in the path if distracted Explorers have been viewed millions of times in the last few weeks alone. Social media arguments that ridicule Explorers (and the resulting defence) turn the human herd away from more important arguments.

And the Wyrms smiles...

miniMonster™ invasion

All over the place, from the popular culture to the propaganda system, there is constant pressure to make people feel that they are helpless, that the only role they can have is to ratify decisions and to consume.

Noam Chomsky

As the popularity of the fad increases, the Board have considered how game play can be used more strategically by the company. Below are some ideas from a recent Brainstorming Retreat from those executives aware of their service to the Wyrms. Any

² See *Subsidiaries: A Guide to Pentex*

³ *ibid*





of these could be used as seeds for a larger chronicle, or simply a single (and inconvenient) encounter.

Despite Garou vigilance, the location of some Caerns are known to Pentex. Rather than assault these outright, the locations are sometimes the focus of mineral rights cases, rezoning and housing development projects, or even illegal dumping. Now, Pentex has decided that the Garou Rage coupled with nuisance factor could lead to some interestingly violent results. By seeding known Garou gathering spaces with rare miniMonsters™ they implicitly encourage curious humans to explore Gaian territories. Groups of interlopers clutching mobile phones and virtually hunting small furry animals will provoke a response – something younger Garou are already raising with their Sept Elders.

By altering the code slightly, Pentex engineers believe that they can digitise spirits (something a few Glass Walker Ikthya have supported) and use handheld mobile devices as a gateway from the Umbra. Recent experiments have shown that a combination of electronic rituals that feed on the users' life force (made easier by their ingestion of

O'Cooleys and Beer) will empower a spirit. Using this stolen power, their influence can grow until either full manifestation or possession of the host is possible. The hunting and animal cruelty inherent in the game predisposes the host for possession and Taints them. Combine this tactic with the one above and truly spectacular results are within reach.

A toy line with feature film rights are already in negotiation. The toys will be blind-bagged randomised versions of the miniMonsters™ which encourages consumers to gamble every time they make a purchase for a non-biodegradable plastic figure⁴. The simultaneous mixture of deep depression when a consumer opens the packet to find a figure they already own, coupled with the insatiable desire to keep collecting cultivates a desperate customer, whilst the secondary market (empowered by inflated prices on eBay) gives the false hope of making back your money by selling unwanted monsters, and collecting those 'last few'

⁴ Consult *Book of the Wyrm 1st Ed* for ideas on Wyrm-tainted toys

for the set. That is of course until Wave 2 is released...

The Garou response

I sat in the dark and thought: There's no big apocalypse. Just an endless procession of little ones.

Neil Gaiman, *Signal to Noise*

These are only a few ways of positioning Pentex with the *miniMonsters™ Go!* craze and how rampant consumerism, product placement, and societal misdirection serve the Wyrms' best interests. It also shows how a seemingly innocuous company like Black Dog can rise to unparalleled financial success on the back of enslavement and animal cruelty.

Garou packs are likely to notice this quickly. The Glass Walkers and Bone Gnawers in particular will realise the fad and monkey-wrenching packs will most likely uncover the Wyrms' influence first. As scores of humans 'invade' a Caern (or at least make it over the Bawn) Sept leadership will have a dilemma. Kinfolk who become addicted to the game run the risk of possession which will torment their wider families. The impact to the Garou Nation is potentially high and tempers are likely to flare, especially as the Red Talons provide commentary on how easily these humans fall under the sway of the Enemy.

Ultimately though, this may prove to be just a fad, and in a years' time will anyone still be trying to

'catch them all'? For the Garou though, time is a luxury they can ill-afford.

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