

CASE STUDY

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

The National Geographic Channel Finds New Ways to Bring Their Shows to Life

As the world premiere of two dinosaur specials, *Dino Death Trap* and *Dino Autopsy*, was quickly approaching, the National Geographic Channel (NGC) was interested in expanding its engagement efforts beyond just the television screen and onto the Internet. The interactive team at NGC set out to launch NGCDinos.com, an interactive Web site that included an interactive Dino-Mummy Timeline and explored a myriad of dino mummy finds from 1908 and onward. Viewers were also given the ability to uncover the strange new dinosaurs caught in the *Dino Death Trap* and interact with 3-D profiles of each.

To further engage their audience, NGC turned to Arkadium to create a customized game that would educate visitors on three key periods of time when dinosaurs ruled the continents. As a result, the game design experts at Arkadium developed a concept that would both challenge players to find fossils and build dinosaur skeletons, and help to expand their knowledge on what many paleontologists have found in their research beneath the surface of the earth.

The resulting game, "Fossil Hunt" puts players in the shoes of a paleontologist and challenges them to find fossils through each of the game's three rounds, representing the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous time periods. The end goal for each round, and the only way to move on to the next, is to match the bones to build a distinct dinosaur from each period. Arkadium game designers employed the same lifelike 3-D models used in the show to allow players to build their dinosaur, and then literally watch it come alive and race off of the screen into the next round of play.

More Than Four Months of "Fossil Hunt" Game Play in Less Than Two Weeks



During the dinosaur specials show airtime, "Fossil Hunt" became the site's most visited and addictive interactive features with an average playing time of over seven minutes per game.

"This was quite big", according to Matthew Zyment, Director of Digital Media Content at National Geographic Channel. "The game did about 8% of the traffic of the total site while the show was being aired. This equates to about 186,000 minutes playing "Fossil Hunt" or 129 days of game play if one person were to play straight through. We think that is pretty

impressive."

From Dinos to Black Belts, Arkadium Gives Players the Tools to Enter their Favorite Shows

On the heels of the successful launch of "Fossil Hunt", NGC set out to build another game - this time for their groundbreaking two-part special, *Fight Science*. The first show, revealed the astonishing data behind the athletic capabilities of legendary mixed martial arts (MMA) fighters, including Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) heavyweight champion Randy Couture. The second show, *Fight Science: Special Ops*, brought together a team of the world's best special operatives to reveal the science behind how super soldiers redefine the upper limits of human performance and thrive in high-threat environments.

NGC again turned to Arkadium to build a challenging game that would further educate players on the moves that drive the speed, force, range and impact of muscles and bones in fighters' bodies.

The game, appropriately branded "Fight Science", transforms the player into a martial artist through a series of training regimens and tests including form, balance and force. Site visitors have the option of guiding their fighter through a practice mode and/or a "Black Belt Quest" challenge mode. In the challenge mode, players can increase their belt color by practicing



and improving the skills of their fighter.

Jessica Rovello, Chairman of Arkadium, said one of the challenges in creating the game was to keep a distance from actual hand-to-hand combat. "Our challenge was to create a fighting game that was fun to play, addictive and appealed to men, yet was completely free of violence," she said. "By focusing on fight training, techniques and challenges we were able to keep the game true to the show and exciting to play."

A unique feature of the game is that in addition to saving fight records, players can also send a "challenge" to their friends to beat their score. The friend can then create his/her own fighter and track their performance against the friend's score. Performance is stored and recorded in each fighter's profile. In this way, players encourage others to play the game, which added an important viral aspect and ultimately resulted in a peak of approximately 7,000 game visits on the day of the show, and at least 2 game plays per visit.

"With the success of the Fossil Hunt and Fight Science games, we have been able to see the level of engagement they provide for our viewers. Arkadium has been a wonderful partner to work with, and as future shows debut on National Geographic Channel, we hope to continue our game development efforts to generate further interest in the content of our programs," said Brad Dancer, VP, Research and Digital Media.