AWS re:Invent

ALX315

# Improving customer retention for your Alexa skill

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# Agenda

Three key questions:

- What is retention and how is it measured?
- What are the principles for building retention into skills?
- How can these principles be applied for key verticals?

# What is retention and how is it measured?



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# Retention is:

- Definition (noun): the condition of retaining or keeping something
- In other words: **repeat usage of your skill**
- Fundamentally: retention is a reflection of skill quality

# Almost all the most popular skills have high retention mechanisms built in. For example:




- NPR
  - 26,564 ratings
  - 4.8/5 average rating




- Jeopardy
  - 23,998 ratings
  - 4.1/5 average rating



- Sleep Sounds: Thunderstorm Sounds
  - 17,466 ratings
  - 4.9/5 average rating

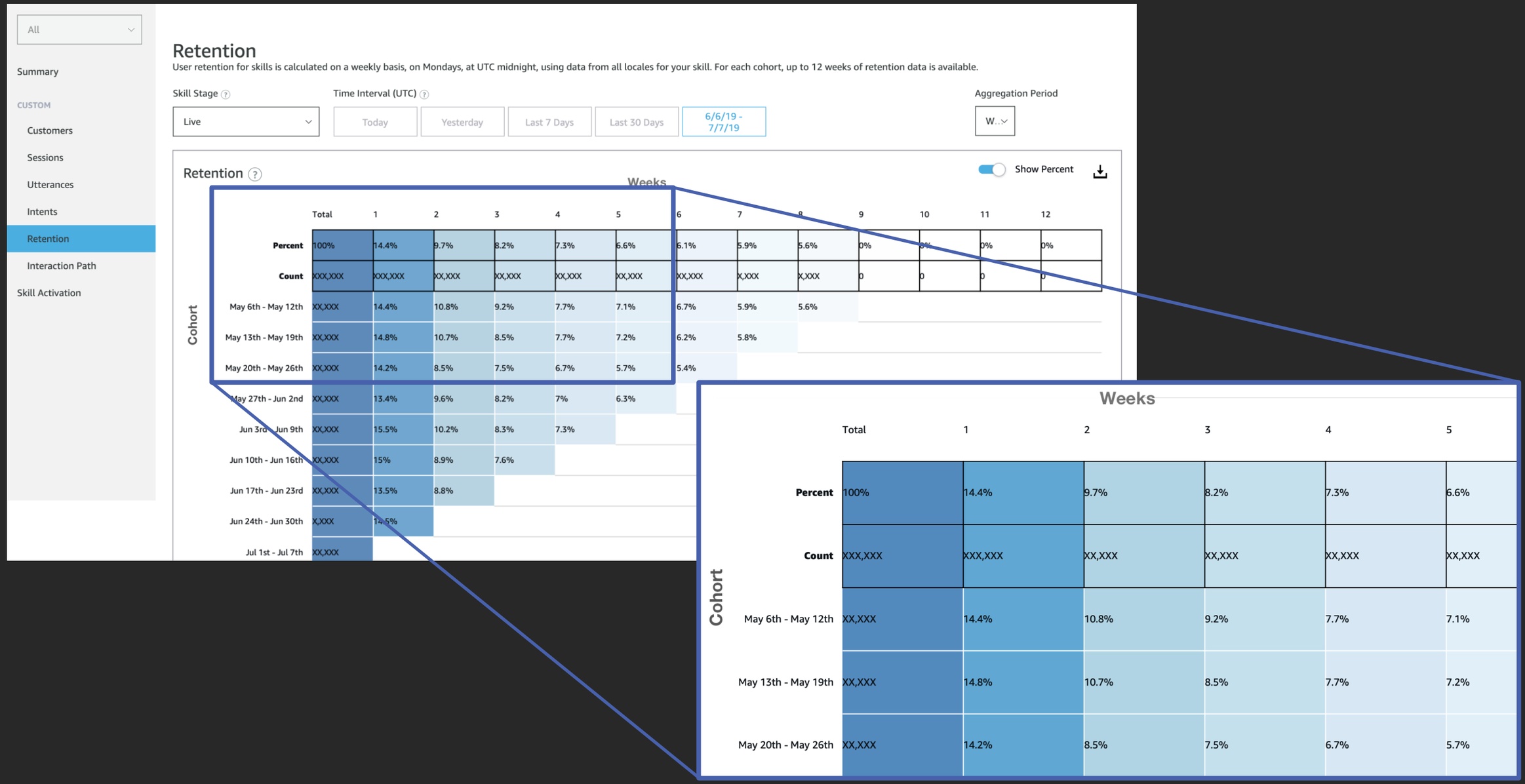


- Big Sky
  - 4,749 ratings
  - 4.5/5 average rating

# What are the best metrics for measuring retention?

- Number of returning users/returning user sessions
- Week-over-week/month-over-month retention rate
- Average number of sessions per user in past week, month, quarter, etc.

# Tools for measuring retention



# What are the principles for building retention into skills?



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# Characteristics of high-retention skills

- Low friction
  - If it’s hard to get a skill to do what you want, people won’t want to use it.
- Quality content
  - Content should be fresh, relevant, and entertaining.
- Mechanisms that spark repeat usage
  - A spark is an event that prompts usage of the skill. Can be external or built into the skill.

# Low friction



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# Low friction

Friction is how difficult it is for a user to get a skill to do what they want it to do

Contribution to friction include:

- Conversational turns
- Misunderstandings
- Functional errors
- Lengthy, unentertaining dialog
- Cognitive load
- Poor or unintelligible audio

"Fix the _ volume."

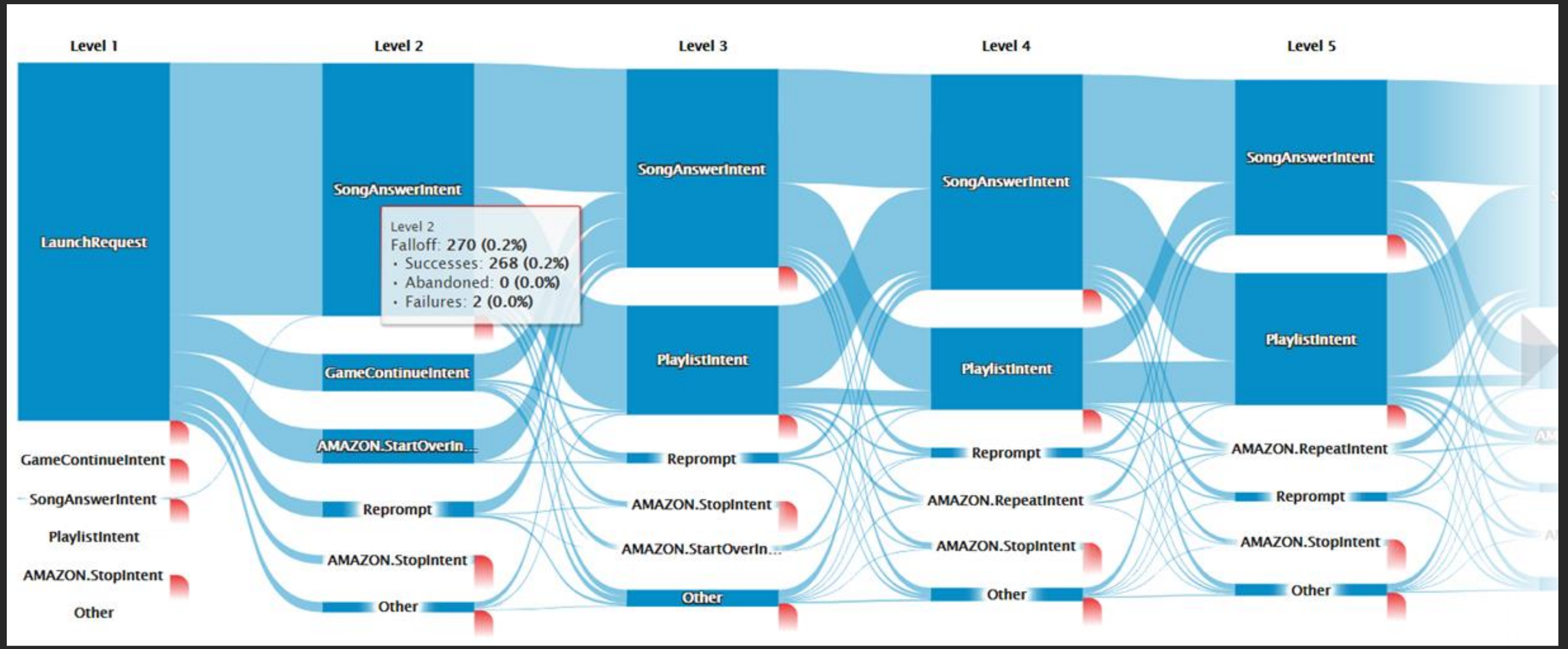
"This game only allows me to answer the first question and then it doesn't understand or accept my 2nd answer."

"This skill is terrible, it even goes on endless loops with 'what do u want?' regardless of what you ask."

"The skill doesn't work with Canadian zip codes."

# Low friction

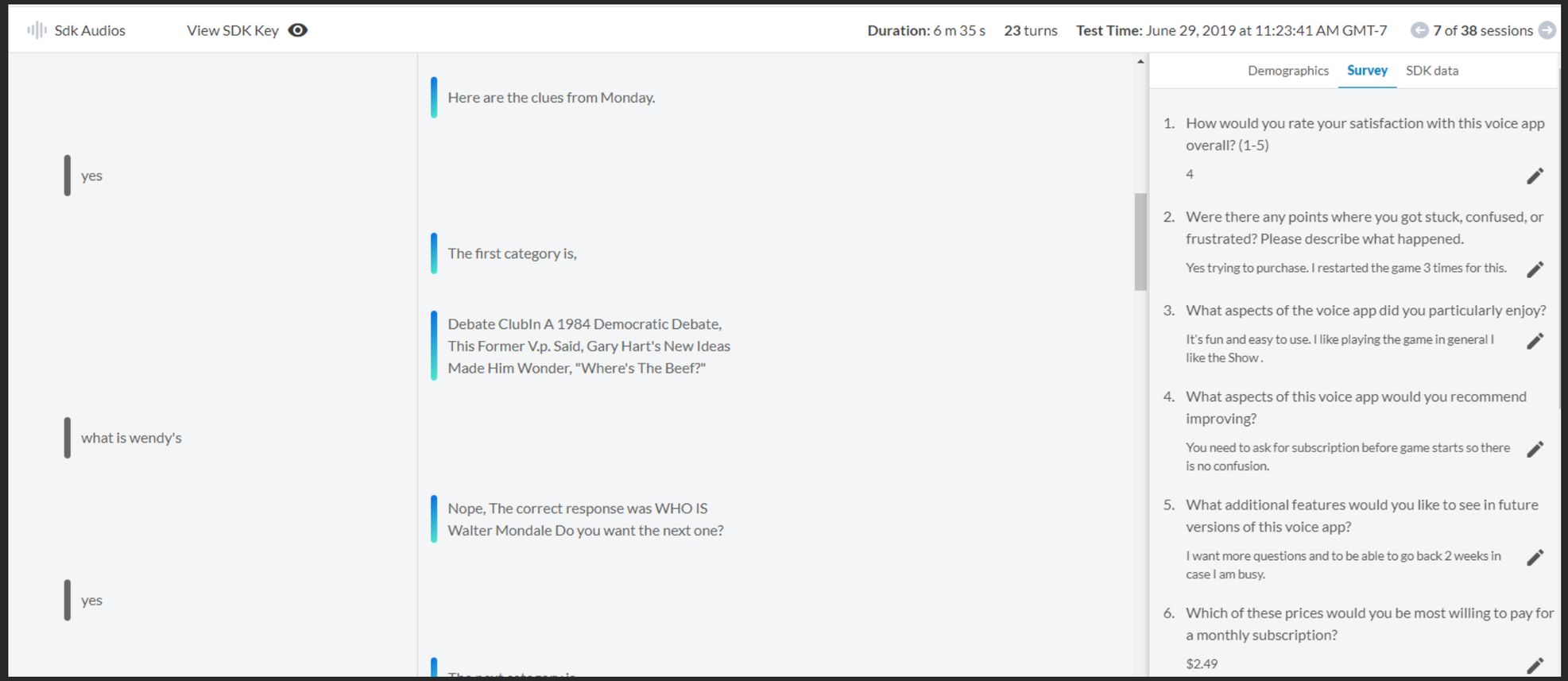
Amazon provides tools for identifying and analyzing friction points



# Low friction

Test your skill with real users, early and often, both before and after you launch your skill

pulselabs



# High-quality content



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# High-quality content

High-quality content motivates customers to use skills. It needs to be framed, contextualized, and designed for engagement.

- Situational content
- Growing over time
- Personalization and getting smarter
- Using a recorded voice vs. Amazon Polly voices vs. TTS
- Keeping content fresh and relevant

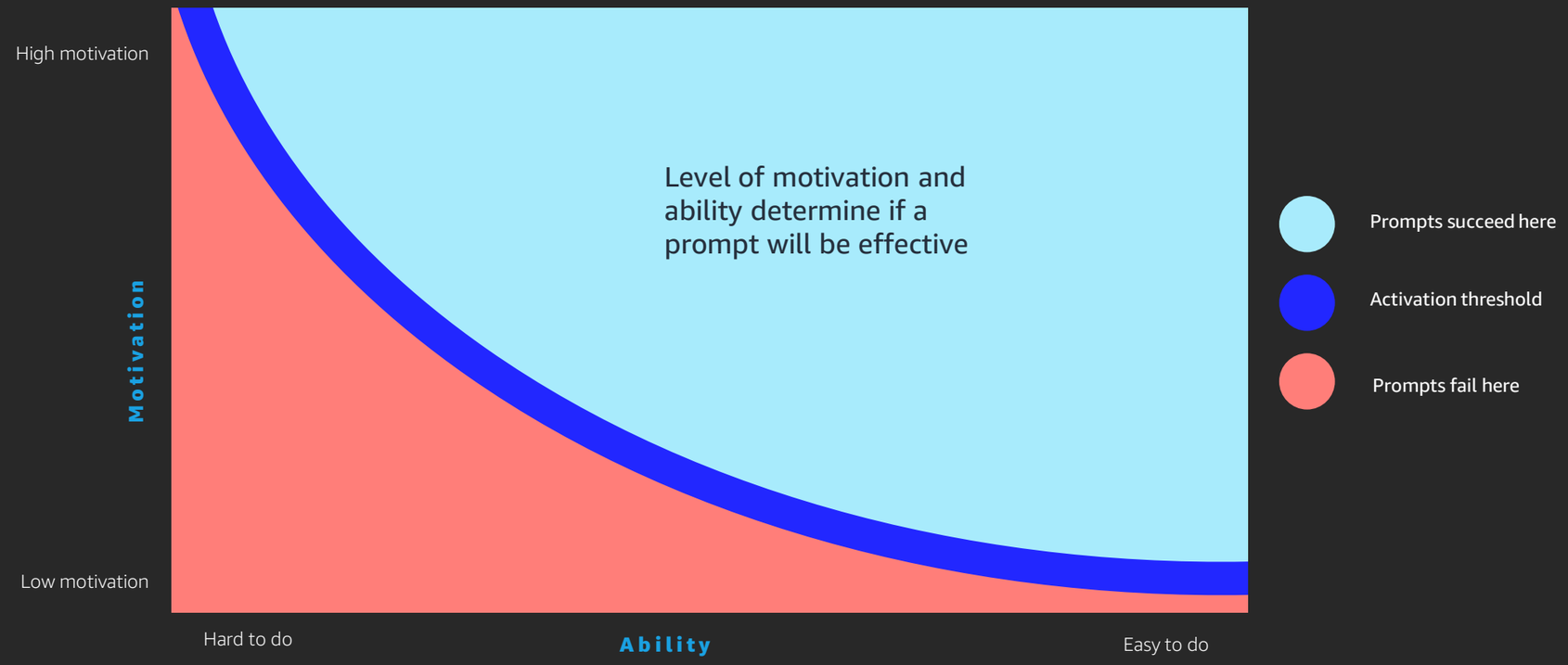


# Events that spark engagement

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# Fogg Behavior Model

The Fogg Behavior Model shows that humans need to be prompted to take action, and motivation must outweigh the friction



# Event types that spark engagement

**Internal events**

In-skill gamification elements and techniques that prompt customer usage, reengagement, and ultimately, retention

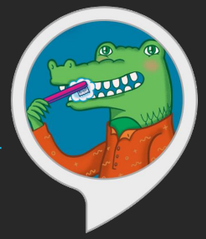
**External events**

Out-of-skill elements, often related to your larger ecosystem, that drive awareness and usage of your skill, such as marketing, notifications, SMS, and more

# Skill engagement techniques

## In-skill engagement events motivate users to do more with your skill

1. Accomplishment
2. Curiosity
3. Ownership
4. Community
5. Prevention
6. Scarcity
7. Creativity
8. Altruism











# Timing is key

Pick pivotal times where your event will have the most value to motivate users

Examples of leisurely moments:

- Going to bed
- Watching a TV show
- Seeing a prompt on a cereal box

# External events

## Events outside of your skill that motivate users to come back

Marketing

Advertising, social



Email

Newsletters

HELLMANN'S "BRING OUT THE BEST" BEST RECIPES

SMS

Text-based alerts

Alexa mechanisms

Proactive events and reminders

NHL

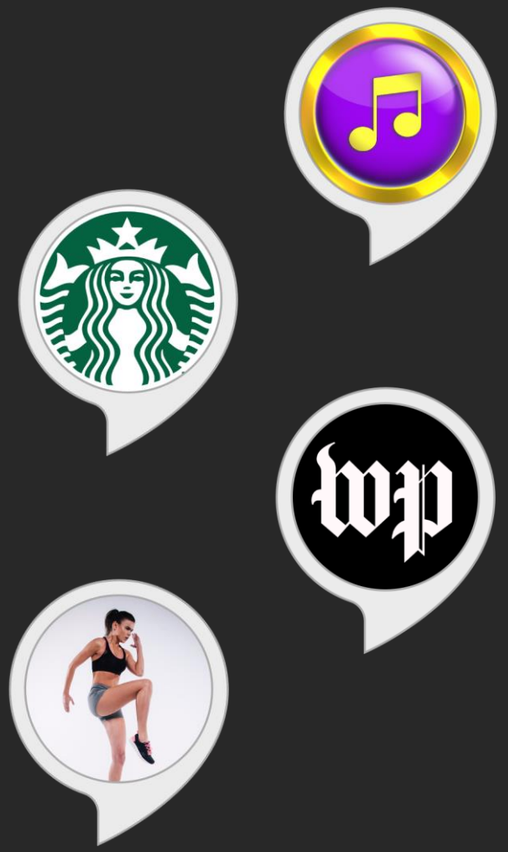
# How can these principles be applied to key verticals?



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# What are some ways to create high-retention skills in:

- Gaming
- Commerce
- News and entertainment
- Health and wellness



# Case studies

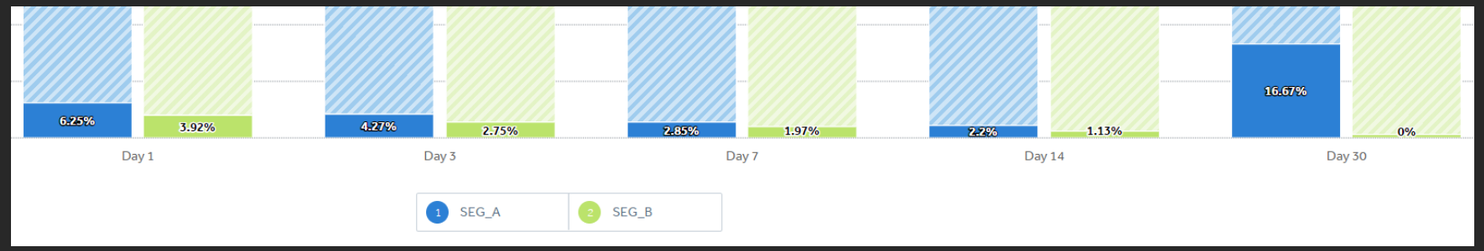


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# Case study: Finish the Phrase

Amazon tested the inclusion of a streak counter in the skill Finish the Phrase and saw an increase in retention among customers that were exposed to the streak counter versus those that were not.

This type of experimentation and iteration is key to understanding what works for your customers in your skill.




Streak counter

No streak counter

Retention breakdown:

- 1d: +233 bps
- 3d: +152 bps
- 7d: +88 bps
- 14d: +107 bps
- 30d: +1667 bps

# Sleep Sounds

**Low friction**:

- Robust, single-command invocation
- On repeat usage, takes user right to the audio

**Quality content:**

- Dozens of high-quality sound recordings
- User can choose the sound they want each night

**Spark:**

- Every night before the user goes to sleep



# Jeopardy!

**Low friction**:

- Introductions personalized to the user's history
- Quickly instructs the user on how to play, then gets to the game
- Question prompts are robust and handle requests like "wait" and "repeat"

**Quality content:**

- Daily content updates
- Utilizes TV host's voice whenever possible

**Spark:**

- User can play the game after watching the show



# Chompers

**Low friction**:

- Launches the story immediately after starting

**Quality content:**

- Frequent high-quality audio content updates

**Spark:**

- Twice daily, when the child brushes their teeth
- Makes a task that can be a chore fun
- Gamification techniques to record “streaks”



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# Thank you!

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