AMBER

The Guide for Successful
COMMUNITY BUILDING IN GAMING

INTRO-DUCTION

In the dynamic gaming industry landscape, where technology evolves rapidly and player expectations constantly shift, the art of community building has emerged as a pivotal force for success. As gaming enthusiasts continue to connect across diverse platforms and devices, the challenge for gaming companies is not merely to sell products but to curate immersive, engaging experiences that transcend traditional transactional relationships.

This white paper embarks on a journey through the multifaceted realm of community building in gaming, strategically addressing the fusion of theory and practice to achieve world-class user experiences. Our exploration is structured into four key pillars, each delving into a distinct facet of community building: theory, reality, plan, and execution.
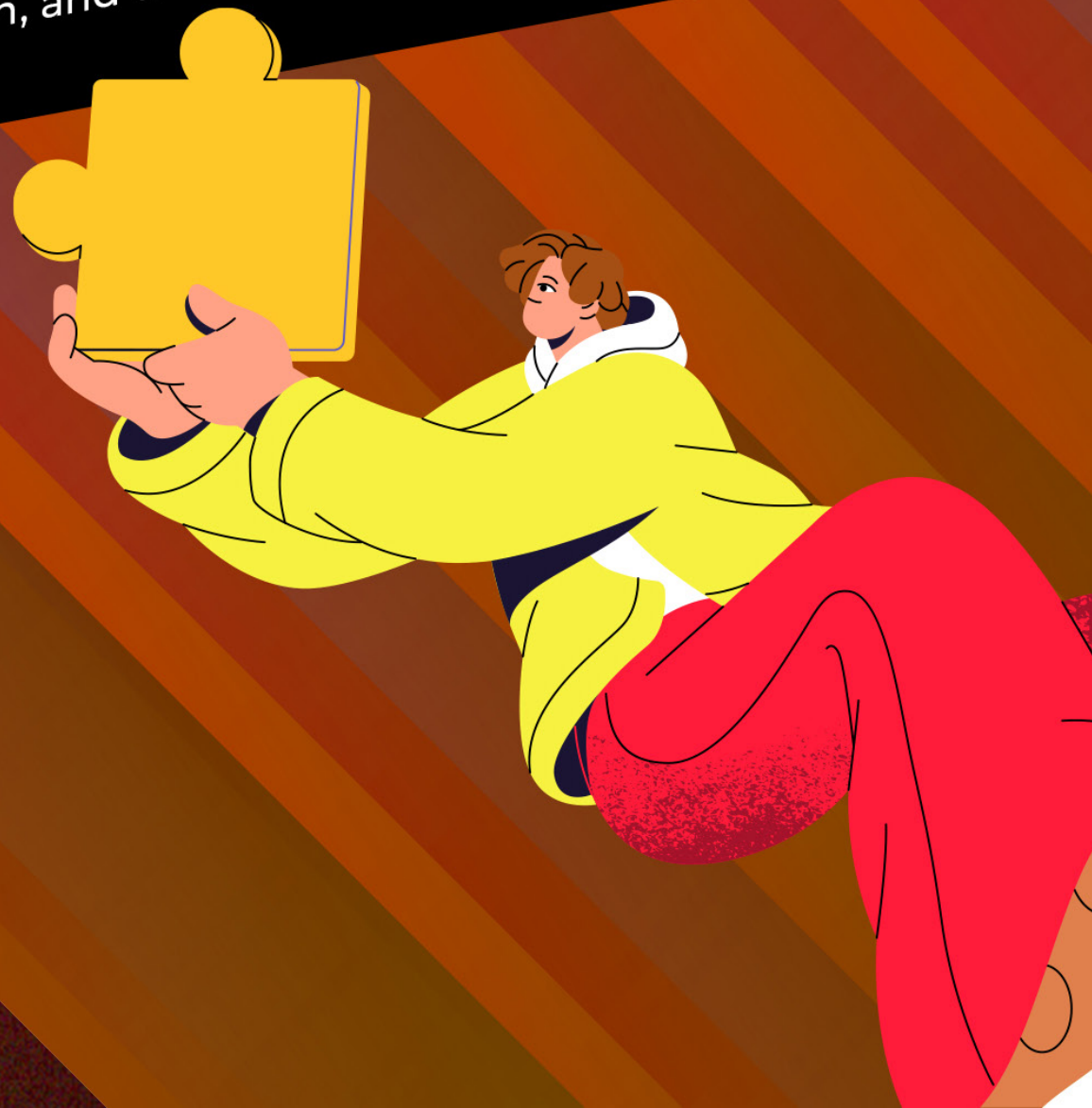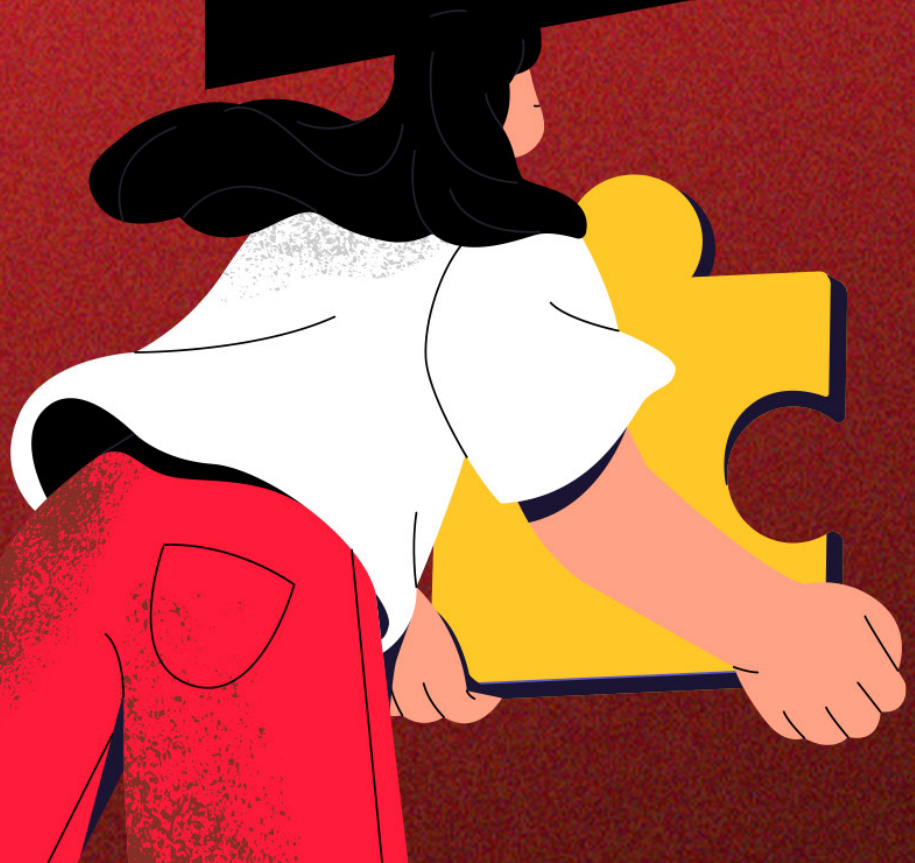
White paper Content Structure

1 **Unveiling the Essence of Community Building in Gaming**
In the theoretical realm, we illuminate the core principles of community building – unraveling its profound significance in the gaming sphere. What exactly constitutes community building, and why is it indispensable for gaming entities in today's digital age?

2 **Navigating the Gaming Landscape: Current Realities and User Expectations**
Transitioning from theory to reality, we explore the contemporary gaming landscape. By examining prevalent devices, user expectations, and the delicate balance between what gamers seek and what gaming companies deliver, we unravel the intricate tapestry that defines the current state of gaming.

3 **Charting the Course: Strategies for In-game and Out-of-game Community Building**
As we transition into the planning phase, we outline a comprehensive roadmap for community building. By dissecting both in-game and out-of-game tactics, we delve into strategies aimed at attracting and empowering gaming communities.

4 **Digital Marketing: Creating and Shepherding Communities**
The final segment explores the diverse and vivid daily digital landscape, from checking off mandatory marketing touchpoints to dissecting social media platforms' unique strengths and in-depth user demographics. By discerning the intricacies of digital communities, we equip gaming entities with the knowledge needed to strategically leverage these platforms as catalysts for community growth and engagement.
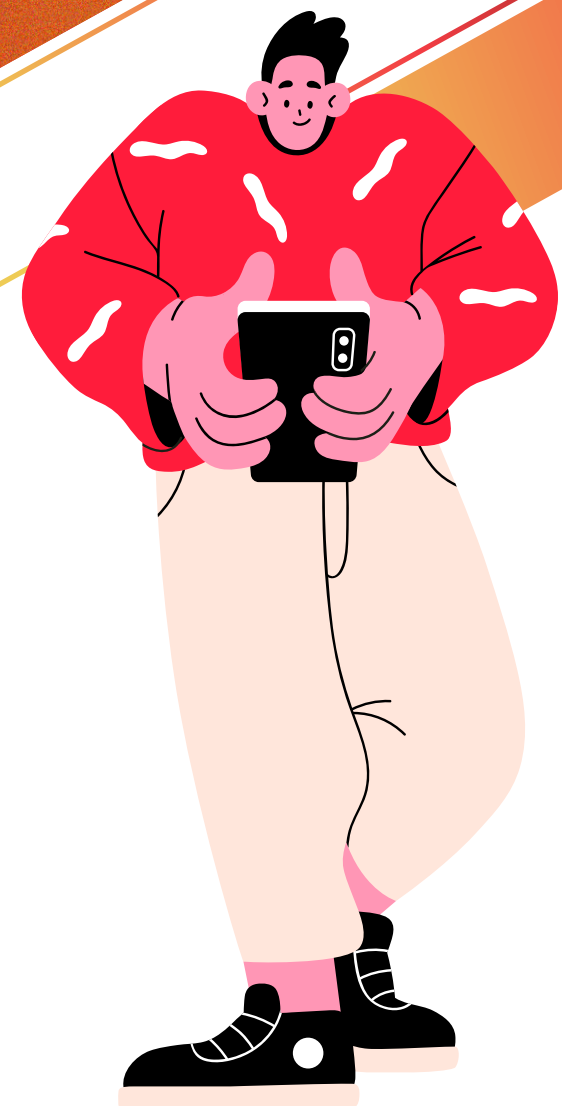
Why Community Building in Gaming?

Building a loyal community around your game boosts every important aspect of your product:

VISIBILITY

Word of Mouth Marketing
Gamers are known for sharing their experiences and opinions with friends and fellow gamers. A positive gaming community can generate significantword-of-mouth marketing, which can be more effective and trusted than traditional advertising.

Content Creation and Promotion
Gamers passionate about a game often create user-generated content such as videos, tutorials, and fan art. This content can attract new players and promote the game through platforms like YouTube, Twitch, and other social media channels.

Competitive Scene
Many popular games have competitive esports scenes. An active community is essential for organizing and sustaining esports tournaments, significantly boosting a game's visibility and popularity.

FEEDBACK

Feedback and Iteration
Building a community allows developers to gather feedback on gameplay, features, and content. This feedback loop is invaluable for improving the game, addressing bugs, and adding new content that resonates with the player base.

Community Support
Players often help each other with gameplay tips, troubleshooting, and general advice. This player-to-player support can reduce the burden on customer support teams and enhance the overall player experience.

RETENTION

Player Engagement
A strong gaming community helps keep players engaged and committed to a game over the long term. Engaged players are more likely to continue playing, purchasing in-game items, and participating in the game's ecosystem.

Community-Driven Events
Gaming communities often organize and participate in events, tournaments, and in-game activities. These events can foster a sense of belonging and excitement, further strengthening the community's ties.

Longevity of the Game
Games with active and passionate communities tend to have longer lifespans. This longevity can translate into sustained revenue streams for developers and publishers.

REVENUE

Monetization
A strong gaming community can drive revenue through in-game purchases, subscriptions, and merchandise sales. Players who feel a sense of belonging are more likely to invest in a game and its associated products.

Brand Loyalty
Building a positive gaming community fosters brand loyalty. Gamers who strongly connect to a game are more likely to support the developers and stay loyal even when new competitors enter the market.

Achieve Community Excellence by Embracing Consumer Reality

Companies beliefs	75% of companies think they're providing good personalized experiences	95% of B2C companies believe consumers trust their ability to protect data.	Companies believe that no consumer would rather shave their head over talking to consumer service
The reality	Over 50% of consumers disagree	Only 65% of consumers actually do trust these companies	36% of consumers say they'd rather shave their head than contact customer service teams
Lessons	**MAKE IT PERSONAL**	**CLOSE THE TRUST GAP**	**ENGAGE SMARTER**
Start Doing	It is more than just communicating about your game. Consumers want to understand why they should buy your product. They expect that the game should be adapted to their culture and identity.	Is the game F2P, or does it require extra purchases to gain in-game content or advantages? Building trust among the communities is not easy, but once the B2C bond is forged, the benefits are mutual.	Once your product is bought, the consumer expects that customer support is guaranteed 24/7. Lack of response or ambiguous, cold communication can easily trigger communication crises.
Masteries unlocked	**CONSUMER TAILORED EXPERIENCES**	**BRAND TRANSPARENCY**	**CUSTOMER SUPPORT**

Follow the UX Path

Building player loyalty involves a comprehensive analysis and optimization of every stage in the user journey.

From the initial ad impression to the implementation of long-term engagement strategies, each component plays a pivotal role in influencing the duration of time players invest in your game, their spending behavior, and the overall lifetime value they contribute.

98%
average viewability of rewarded video ads

94%
average VTR of rewarded video ads

Ads are not to be Skipped

The primary avenue for players to discover new games continues to be mobile game advertising, with almost half (49.75%) of them depending on ads for this purpose.

However, the influence of personal connections should not be discarded, as app store exploration (39.4%) and direct recommendations (34.8%) closely trail behind in significance.

Ads Creativity

Creating a compelling social ad for a game requires focusing on various creative elements to capture the audience's attention and drive engagement.

Visual Appeal: use eye-catching imagery;

Clarity of Message: deploy single-minded messages, focusing on one KSP at a time and a clear CTA;

Real Gameplay: avoid annoying users by delivering fake in-game footage;

Storytelling: be sure that the creative follows a correct and easy-to-understand narrative;

Formatting: use the right formats for the platform the ad will be implemented on;

Interactivity: playable ads create on-the-spot user engagement.
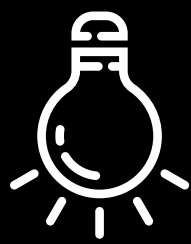
DID YOU KNOW?

Research indicates that a mere 2% of a mobile game's player base has the potential to generate a substantial 95% of its in-app purchase (IAP) revenue. Therefore, prioritizing the cultivation of player habits and building loyalty is imperative for achieving sustainable long-term success.

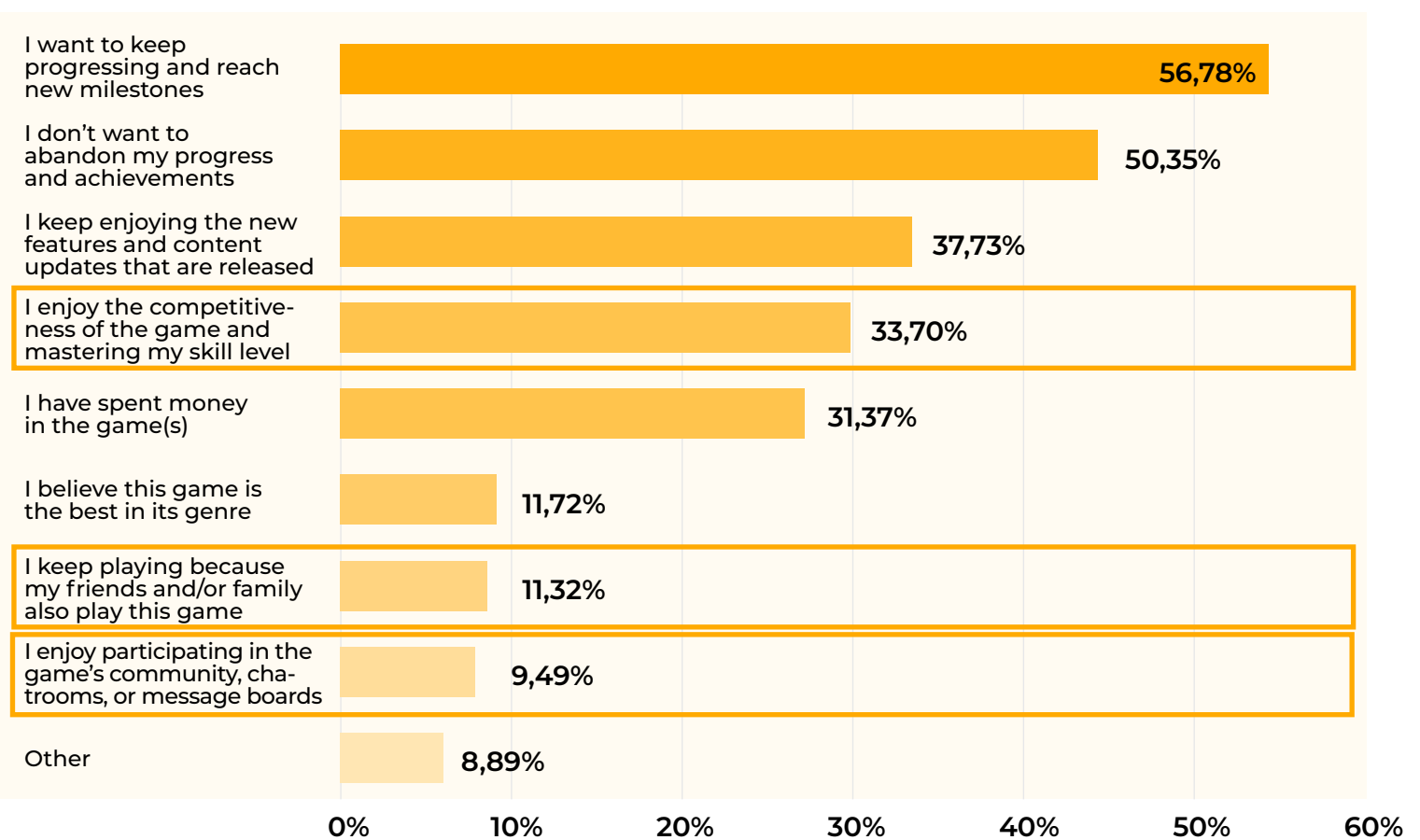Sources: Casual Gaming Advertising White Paper 2023 by Smartclip;
2023 Mobile Gaming Loyalty Report by Mistplay;
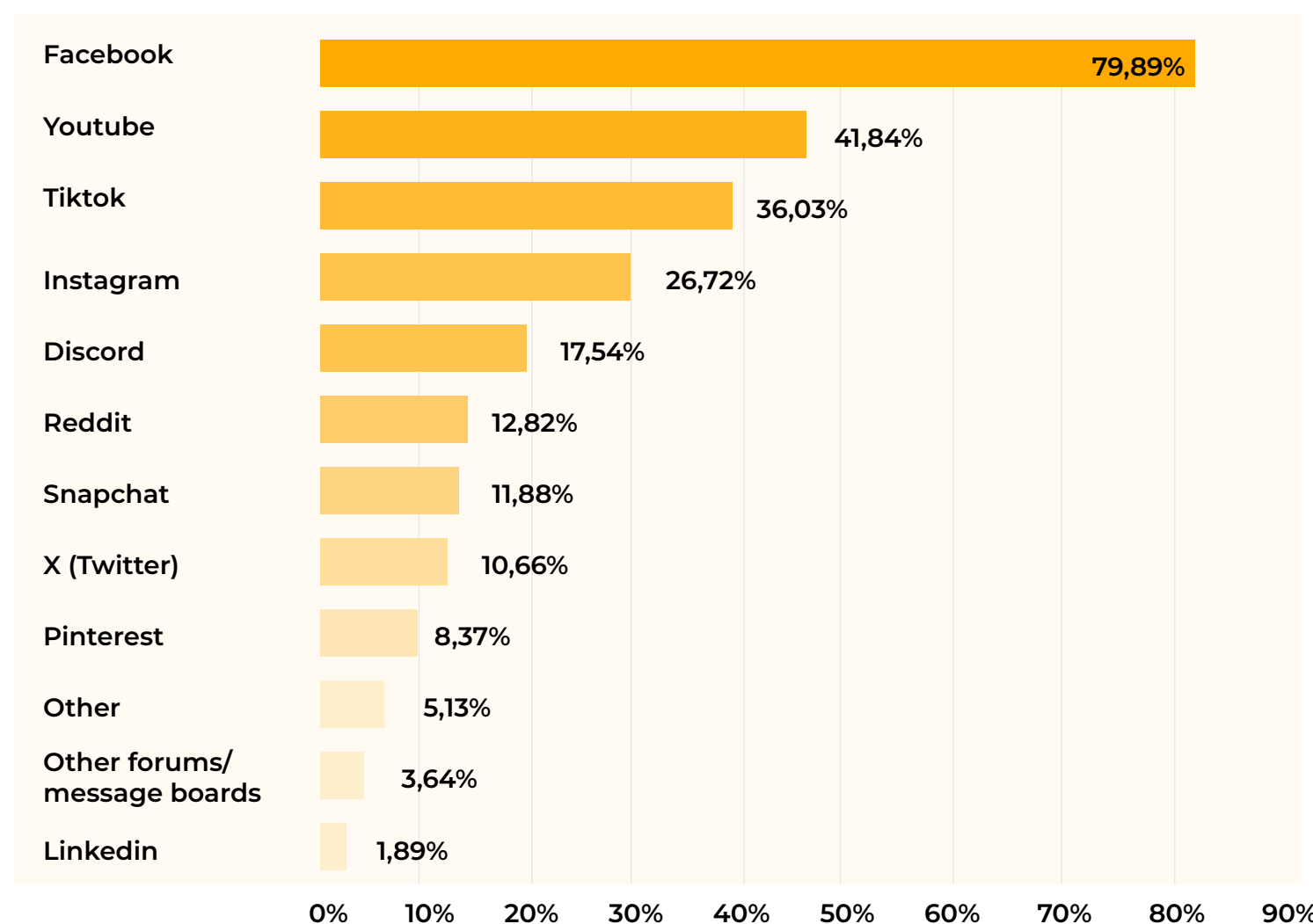
Communities Thrive in Social Media

Sustaining player engagement and long-term retention heavily depend on progression. Specifically, the primary motivations for players to persist in a game are the aspiration to continue advancing (56.8%) and the inclination to avoid abandoning their in-game progress (50.3%).

But at the same time, community-related touchpoints make up an aggregated 54.51% of players' motivation (competitiveness, close recommendations & community engagement) to continue gameplay.

Player motivations for continued gameplay

Motivation	Percentage
I want to keep progressing and reach new milestones	56,78%
I don't want to abandon my progress and achievements	50,35%
I keep enjoying the new features and content updates that are released	37,73%
I enjoy the competitiveness of the game and mastering my skill level	33,70%
I have spent money in the game(s)	31,37%
I believe this game is the best in its genre	11,72%
I keep playing because my friends and/or family also play this game	11,32%
I enjoy participating in the game's community, chatrooms, or message boards	9,49%
Other	8,89%

Social networks players use to discuss mobile games

Social network	Percentage
Facebook	79,89%
Youtube	41,84%
Tiktok	36,03%
Instagram	26,72%
Discord	17,54%
Reddit	12,82%
Snapchat	11,88%
X (Twitter)	10,66%
Pinterest	8,37%
Other	5,13%
Other forums/ message boards	3,64%
Linkedin	1,89%

Among users who explore new games through social media, Facebook emerges as the predominant channel, with 80% of respondents identifying it as their primary platform for discussing mobile games and seeking recommendations.

Closely trailing behind, YouTube and TikTok offer significant platforms, with their video-centric nature—long-form for YouTube and short-form for TikTok—making them ideal spaces for gaming content that promotes engagement and facilitates the discovery of new games.

Source: 2023 Mobile Gaming Loyalty Report by Mistplay

Community Building Tactics

In-Game
Community Building

In the gaming world, in-game community building happens through guilds and alliances, where players collaborate on quests and social activities. Features like group chat and shared resources enhance camaraderie and competition, creating a unique social fabric within the game.

Out-of-Game
Community Building

Out-of-game community building occurs through forums, social media groups, and events. Players discuss strategies, share experiences, and form connections in meetups, extending relationships beyond the game. This strengthens a supportive network, enhancing the overall gaming experience.

IN-GAME TACTICS

Player Organizations

Player Competition

Player-to-player Communication

Socially Open World

Community Events

Game Economy

OUT-OF-GAME TACTICS

Prelaunch Engagement

Social Media Communication

Player-to-dev Communication

Player Advocacy

Player Generated Content

Source: Online Community Building Techniques Used by Video Game Developers

In-Game Tactics

Player Organizations

In games, players form groups for shared interests or friendships. Guilds provide structures for socialization, cooperation, and success, with dynamics like politics and rivalry. They require commitment, often forming naturally with in-game features. Alternatively, a simplified 'factions' system reduces complexity.

A class/skill system encourages interdependence, requiring collaboration for diverse skills, creating a "barrier to entry" through player interaction. Reciprocal help builds community bonds, but rules on player interactions are crucial to prevent exploitation.

Player-to-player Communication

Communication Effective in-game communication is vital for community members. Games commonly include typed-text channels and private messaging, with context-based channels limiting group chat to specific game areas or guilds. Some games offer IRC-style functionality for customized channels, although global chat may be restricted for realism.

The prevalence of broadband Internet has enabled voiceover-IP in games, enhancing communication speed and expression. Offline communication methods and in-game classifieds provide additional avenues, accommodating diverse player preferences for effective communication.

Game Economy

Persistent-world games have introduced "virtual economies", where players trade meaningful goods, services, and currencies within the game, assisting online communities as they seek trading partners. The value of an item is primarily determined by its utility, with uniqueness and rarity also playing significant roles.

In-game trading systems can be incorporated to support a virtual economy. Secure trading systems can be implemented to prevent player scams. Additionally, players may have the option of unattended trading, allowing them to list items for sale even when offline.

Player Competition

Encourage player competition to boost social interaction and rivalries, generating engaging discussions about the game. In single-player games, competition is promoted through score uploads on websites. Multiplayer games often involve player vs. player (PvP) competition, allowing opt-in action within defined contexts.

"Griefing", the exploitation of game mechanics to harass players, necessitates fair play rules. To prevent it, developers may implement deterrence measures like removing rewards for experienced players killing newcomers to maintain balance. Another option is creating safe areas restricting PvP based on player preferences.

Socially Open World

The layout of a game world significantly impacts player interactions. Thoughtful social space design enhances socialization during gameplay. Sociability hinges on recurrent player gathering spots, like areas for acquiring goods or missions. Factions may have designated "home areas", and designers must plan travel routes and encounter points.

Travel, trading, interactions, and progression should occur to maintain a robust shared world. Instancing is best for specific tasks, ensuring that a group entering is the sole occupant at that time. This approach avoids the perception of multiple teams entering their version of the world through a magic door.

Community Events

Engaging in the online community is possible through various staged events, including in-game meetings with developers, quests, battles, tournaments, or social gatherings.

Periodically, developers may introduce missions or quests tied to the storyline, offering associated rewards. This approach provides players with fresh objectives, fostering collaboration or competition as they work to accomplish the tasks.

Out-of-Game Tactics

🚀 Prelaunch Engagement

The success of community-based games relies on player pools, with the absence of active players significantly diminishing the appeal. Establishing a steady community before a game's release and swiftly reaching a critical mass of players post-launch are pivotal factors for success.

Creating an early community involves a strategic blend of game development and traditional marketing techniques. This encompasses the importance of social media, forums, a comprehensive website, and providing engaging content to fan sites and communities. Direct developer interaction and open beta testing are also very effective approaches.

🎮 Player-to-Dev Communication

Developers can enhance player engagement independently or by appointing community managers to maintain ongoing communication. Trust is paramount, necessitating transparent communication about game changes and roadmap.

Encouraging players to form groups within the community can be a strategy. Developers can then interact with a designated representative of each group.

Player Advocacy

High-ranking players can serve as influential advocates, crucial in promoting the game and fostering a strong community. These champions emerge as leaders within the community, taking on responsibilities such as organizing fellow players, advocating for their concerns, and providing valuable feedback.

Selecting the right players as community champions is essential for success and for a healthy fandom. They must encompass fairness, honesty, and genuine commitment to bolster a positive community atmosphere.

Social Media Communication

Social media channels are the central hub for player engagement with game vendors or developers. They are essential communication ecosystem components for every game, offering platforms where players can discuss the game and various topics.

The channels are familiar platforms for debates with developers on the game's current status and future developments. Additionally, they serve as spaces where players assist each other with technical issues, exchange gameplay tips, and collaborate on content creation and other projects.

Player Generated Content

Player-generated content significantly enhances a game's scope and replay value, providing players with a creative outlet for self-expression and collaboration. Developers can sustain a content creation and sharing culture by implementing several strategies. They can offer user-friendly tools that empower individuals with limited technical expertise to craft game content easily.

High-quality content can be encouraged by incentivizing creators with extra benefits, such as privileged access to the development team or inclusion in a commercial release.

Why Digital Marketing?

Digital marketing is pivotal for community building in game development.

It enables widespread reach, builds brand awareness, and fosters engagement through social media and interactive campaigns.

Content creation, advertising, and user feedback channels enhance user acquisition, retention, and community input. Effective digital marketing is the linchpin for connecting, growing, and sustaining gaming communities in the dynamic gaming landscape.
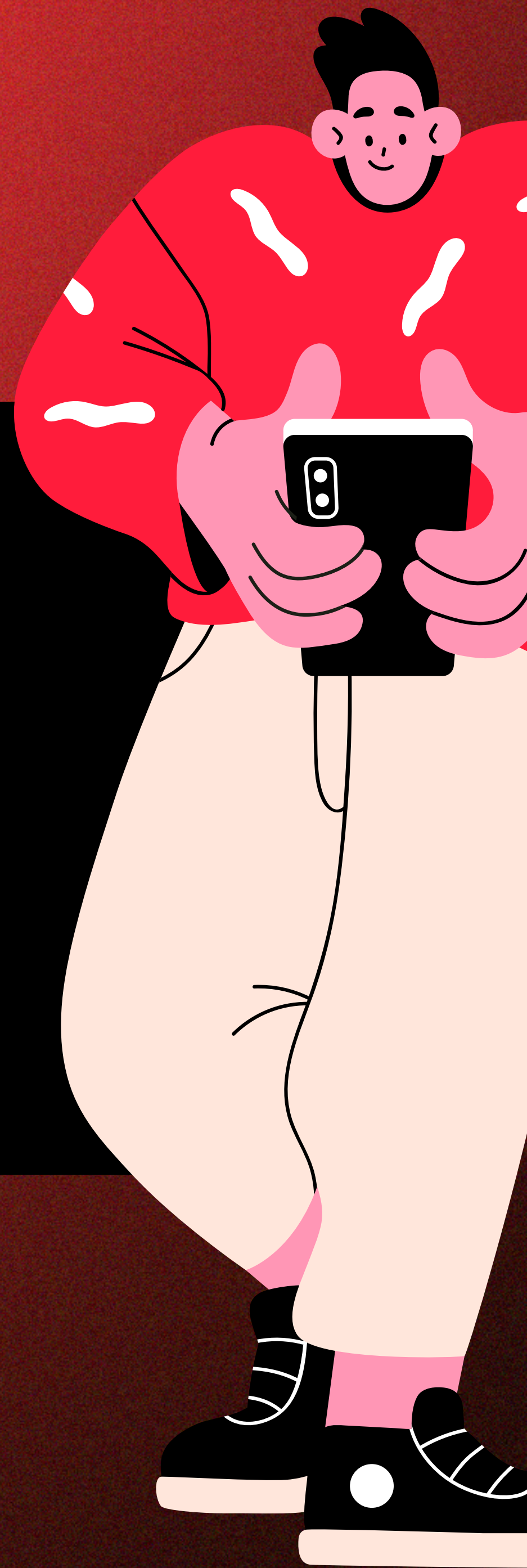
Phases of Marketing Deployment

Understand your target audience
Create buyer personas, get to know what their interests are, and most importantly, where to find them.

Set the right KPIs
Each phase has different KPIs. Prototype phase: validate the market's appeal for the concept; Prelaunch phase: gain as many followers as possible and keep them engaged; Launch & post-launch: UA is crucial.

"Marketing-first" approach
Think about how you will approach marketing from the early prototype stages. What type of content created for the game can be re-used for marketing purposes, how will it appeal to the target audience, etc.?

Allocate proper and skilled staff
All platforms are constantly improving and adding features. Be ahead of the game and stay updated with the latest changes so you can make the best out of each platform.

Be on the relevant platforms
Not all platforms are created equal, and each has different strengths & limitations. Create the mix of platform(s), having in mind the audience, the KPIs, and what resources can and will be allocated.

Hit'em early
As soon as you have anything to show, show everyone you can. Be loud and proud. Momentum takes a long time to build, so you should start immediately. Focus on relevant quality content that is suitable for a specific platform.

The Marketing Touchpoints

25%
Marketing Strategy

- Ensuring content, activities, and marketing is in line with studio values, guidelines, and personality;
- Measuring success and ensuring the game's marketing is performing well, or noting any drops and why;
- Ensuring product pages are kept up to date and/or are consistent;
- Strategizing campaigns for sustained and increased brand awareness;
- Monitoring competitor activities to measure their impact and influence;
- Working with external partners on marketing content and asset approvals.

20%
Social Media Management

- Creating content, generating ideas, tracking and scheduling optimal dates for content or announcements, and ensuring content is relevant, engaging, and posted regularly;
- Working with artists to create content for social;

- Planning and executing social media and communication campaigns.

30%
Community Management

- Interacting with players, public, influencers and partners;
- Monitoring conversations and events to ensure the studio is participating and represented appropriately;
- Monitoring the interaction level, volume, and tone with the community and identifying the appropriate methods of communication style;
- Note influencers and trends within the community and dreaming up ways to highlight members of the community;
- Community sentiment and checking up on our reviews;
- In-game community improvement;
- Contact and in-between person for mods, the dev team, and players.

10%
Reporting & Analytics

- Create sentiment reports from new launches, working

directly with the dev team to provide suggestions for future improvement;
- Tracking traffic and interactions, such as likes, comments, and shares;
- Conglomerating critical information from social networks to provide feedback to the team on future decisions. This includes being able to understand and sift through what is just loud, what is plentiful but ultimately not urgent, and understanding what the actual key issues are;
- Gathering information from the community as requested by the development team.

15%
Influencers & Press

- Answering press questions and/or forwarding them to the appropriate parties;
- Events and stream appearances;
- Emailing press about new features and news coming to the game;
- Working with influencers and providing support or passing on any opportunities to them;
- Approving/fielding influencers, events, and related when using the game.

Social Media Channels Analysis

	Facebook [1]25-34 (29.9%) [2]Millennials [3]30 min	Instagram [1]18-24 (30.8%) [2]Gen Z [3]30.1 min	TikTok [1]18-24 (21%) [2]Gen Z [3]45.8 min	YouTube [1]18-35 (highest reach) [2]Gen Z & Millenials [3]45.6 min	X [1]18-29 (52%) [2]Gen Z & Millenials [3]34.8 min	Discord [1]25-34 (42.4%) [2]Millenials [3]24 min
BRAND PROFILE	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
SOCIAL MEDIA ADS	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
USER GENERATED CONTENT	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
HASHTAGS		✔	✔	✔	✔	
INFLUENCERS	✔	✔	✔	✔		
DIRECT MESSAGING		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
BROADCAST CHANNELS		✔		✔	✔	
EVENTS	✔					
GROUPS	✔					✔
MESSENGER	✔					
BRAND SERVER						✔
SERVER CHANNELS						✔
ROLES AND PERMISSIONS						✔
BOTS						✔
INTEGRATION WITH EXTERNAL PLATFORMS						✔

[1]Largest Age Group; [2]Main Generation; [3]Time spent per day.

Content Tactics Sample
Per Game Development Phases

1
Concept & Prototype Phase

1. Assemble a core team to manage community-building tasks.

2. Set up social media profiles for the game on relevant platforms (Twitter, Instagram, etc.)

3. Create dedicated website if necessary.

4. Set up Discord server and populate with relevant subsections (FAQ, etc.), and begin setting up moderation bots to avoid spam and other bad actors.

2
Pre-Production

1. AMA (Ask Me Anything) sessions with developers on platforms like Reddit or Discord.

2. Initiate playtests with interested fans to collect feedback early on.

3. Run regular polls or surveys to get player input on certain features and gameplay elements.

3
Mid-Late Production

1. Build hype with promo teasers, trailers.

2. Share developer interviews or features to humanize the development team and make players feel more connected to the game creation process.

4
Prelaunch

1. Start a closed/open beta or early access phase.

2. Ramp up marketing efforts with increased social media activity, ad placements, and influencer collaborations.

3. Provide the community with resources like game guides, tutorials, or forums where they can discuss game strategies.

5
Launch and Post-Launch

1. Coordinate a launch event, online if necessary, celebrating the release and acknowledging the community's contribution.

2. Post-launch, continue to engage the community with regular updates, patch notes, and responses to feedback.

3. Host in-game events or challenges to keep the player base active and engaged.

Sources: Online Community Building Techniques Used by Video Game Developers;
The Latest Discord Statistics: Servers, Revenue, Data, and More by Influencer Marketing Hub;
Discord Users: How Many People Use Discord? by Bankmycell

Main Takeaways

Community Building's Crucial Role: Highlighting the fundamental importance of community building in the gaming industry, emphasizing that success is no longer solely dependent on product sales. Instead, the focus is crafting immersive and engaging experiences beyond transactional relationships.

Theoretical Foundation: Unveiling the theoretical underpinnings of community building in gaming, defining its core principles, and explaining why it is indispensable in the digital age. This sets the groundwork for understanding the essence of fostering gaming communities.

Reality Check in the Gaming Landscape: Exploring the contemporary gaming landscape, considering prevalent devices, user expectations, and the delicate balance between gamer desires and what gaming companies provide. This section offers insights into the current state of gaming, providing a foundation for effective community-building strategies.

Comprehensive Roadmap: The planning phase introduces a comprehensive roadmap for community building, covering both in-game and out-of-game strategies. It offers actionable insights aimed at attracting and empowering gaming communities, bridging the gap between theory and practical implementation.

Digital Marketing Insights: Exploring essential marketing touchpoints and dissecting various social media platforms' unique strengths and demographics. This equips gaming entities with the knowledge to strategically leverage digital platforms as catalysts for community growth and engagement.

Empowering Gaming Entities: The overarching takeaway is that the white paper empowers gaming entities with the knowledge and tools to successfully navigate the evolving gaming landscape. It emphasizes the shift from a product-centric approach to a community-centric one, acknowledging the importance of continuous adaptation to meet the changing expectations of gamers.

Unveiling the Amber Model

A cutting-edge game development approach integrating marketing and business intelligence.

1

Initiate internal process

The product / studio team briefs the Marketing & Business Intelligences teams about the game plans and phasing, providing an accurate brief with target personas, possible competition, existing insights, etc.

2

Discover Insights

Marketing & Business Intelligence teams crunch the data, analyze audience and define the correct strategic and creative approach, before going to the drawing board.

3

Define & Create

Define a community building strategy with the right metrics & KPI's, a rollout plan, dedicated resources and milestones.

4

4. Collaborate & Activate

Collaborate with internal teams (marketing and product / game team) to create assets, content, and unroll all phases of the plan, according to the strategy.

5

5. Track & Measure

Ensure that campaigns' performance is tracked and measured, and that data is used to optimize processes.

AMBER

Contact us

AMBER is an international, preferred game development partner specializing in a diverse range of platforms and genres.

We are evolving the art and science of play by operating on a scaled-up, vertically integrated organizational model to achieve mastery in the full set of game development specializations.

Our global network of multidisciplinary studios functions like an integrated hub, offering a full range of turn-key product development solutions, including concept-to-delivery game production, live operations, co-development, art production, and support services such as QA or localization.

We have deep expertise in product development, cross-platform deployment, parallel launch strategies, user experience optimization, free-to-play monetization systems, data science, live operations, and more.

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