



Geonomics

PLAYER-CENTRIC PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT: WHY PUTTING PLAYERS FIRST IS KEY TO BUILDING A TRULY GREAT INTERACTIVE LOTTERY GAME.

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There's a great deal of talk these days about the lessons lottery can learn from the interactive games industry. And whilst lottery cannot and should not abandon any of the many features that have made it a vastly successful, time-honoured format, there is still much to be learned from the practices of its distant cousins in the interactive gaming world (an industry, let's not forget, predicted to grow to \$60bn by 2017¹).

The beauty of the online environment from a game development perspective, lottery or otherwise, is the ability it gives us to be versatile, responsive and capture rich data about player behaviour that we can use to make our games better: in essence, it helps us create games that players love to play.

Making a successful interactive game is a job that's never finished: it involves a constant cycle of rolling out updates, testing how players react, and using the results to inform future iterations of the game. That's how developers like Zynga have created games that are so popular. And that's how we at Geonomics are approaching making interactive lottery games that both appeal to existing players and attract new ones from different demographics.

So, what makes a winning, profitable interactive lottery game? The answer is that there is no hard-and-fast rule or universal formula for creating a successful product: it all comes down to taking a player-centric approach to creating games in which player preference shapes the next move in game development. At Geonomics, we're currently conducting a great deal of testing surrounding our product GeoLotto, which is in its beta phase to be rolled out in the UK later this year. While a lot of what we are learning is specific to the region in question, I'd like to take the opportunity to share with you some of the factors that we've been experimenting with, both because I believe they have clear implications for lotteries all over the world, and also as a demonstration of the iterative learning and development process that we put in place with any lottery partner we work with.

Presenting players with a completely new lottery-playing format requires some serious thinking from a usability perspective, as there are so many parameters that are different from the common 6/49 lottery format. User experience (UX) is a vitally important part of player retention (after all, people are far less likely to want to spend money on a game that is confusing and doesn't provide clear instruction), so we've set about simplifying the format of GeoLotto to minimize any uncertainty about the game from a user perspective.

Small changes can make a big difference, and we're finding that adding features as simple as a 'how to play' pop-up box on entry to the game so that players do not have to navigate away from the main game screen for instruction is proving successful. Likewise, we've seen a positive response to standardising the size of the

'Geos' or squares on the map that users can buy, instead of basing their size on factors like whether they're situated over a densely populated city or in the countryside. And we wouldn't be aware of the impact of any of these minor tweaks if we weren't constantly testing them on real-life players.

The flexibility of the internet-based environment also affords us great scope for getting creative with game format, and we've been trialling various factors to do with draw frequency and prizes, the results of which have been incredibly interesting. For example, we've extensively tested how players respond to weekly, as opposed to daily, prize draws and have found that players appear to enjoy the excitement and anticipation that builds when we announce winners every seven days. Add into the equation the ability to create hybrid game formats that contain an instant-win element as well as a prize draw, and you are then able to engage players both in the short-term and over longer periods of time. As always, testing player response and using it to decide our next steps is at the heart of each experiment.

We've also increased the prize-giving capability of our platform so that we can offer a greater range of bonuses, both in the form of online prizes, such as extra money to spend on the game, and also coupons and other offline promotions. We're hoping this will create important bridges between online, internet-based lottery gaming and off-line retail channels, and we're interested to see how the two can complement each other.

Lastly, we've been learning a great deal about marketing lottery games in a digital world: something that is important to get right if lottery is going to cut through the social gaming noise and appeal to the younger generations. The internet presents lotteries with a unique, unmissable opportunity to meet players in their home environment and pique their interest with highly targeted, relevant messages in a way that offline marketing simply cannot. We've been experimenting with campaigns cleverly targeted at specific user demographics, presenting them with personalised landing pages that really capture their attention, to engage them not just the first time they play our games, but throughout their (hopefully lengthy) playing lifetime. This type of marketing is fast becoming standard practice in many industries, and it's important for lottery to follow suit if it is to remain relevant in the 21st century.

In an ever-digital world, attracting and retaining the attention of consumers is an increasingly complex task. However, lotteries should not shy away from the opportunities that the internet presents. The key to creating a great interactive lottery game is surprisingly simple: put your players first, keeping their preferences at the heart of everything you do, and you'll have on your hands a product that they love, because it's their preferences that have shaped it. ♦

1) Global Games Investment Review 2014.