



A Lesson from Facebook: Multi-Player Games

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OThe discussion the lottery industry is having about social networks far too often leads to a review of some new marketing app for Facebook, instead of addressing how lotteries can benefit from the factors that are driving the dramatic growth and popularity of game-play on these social sites.

Social networks like Facebook confirm, once again, that people love to play digital games. New games of all types take off every-day, however competitive and collaborative multi-player games like Zynga Poker, Mafia Wars and Farmville are, by far, the most popular. In fact more than 30 million people played Texas Hold 'em Poker in December 2009, in spite of the fact that a major attribute of the game was missing – you can't win money. The fact that millions choose to play the games through a multi-player format, rather than alone (i.e., single player vs. the computer), is a key factor particularly relevant to lotteries.

What this means to lottery administrators is that social networks provide something much more important than simply another generic audience to advertise to. Social networks show how multi-player games appeal to the basic human desires for thrills and the fun of playing web games against other people.

Lottery professionals who recognize the importance of the multi-player game trend occurring in social networks might rightfully wonder how to use that information in an industry that deals almost exclusively in single player tickets. The answer could be second-chance lottery programs.

Interactive Games are Fun

Second chance web-based lottery games offer lottery players additional value out of an otherwise non-winning lottery ticket, and can be linked to any printed lottery ticket purchased in a store. These games extend the excitement and enjoyment of the lottery ticket purchase by offering lottery fans a second chance to play and compete for prizes, while providing lotteries with a second opportunity to stay engaged with each lottery player after the point of sale.

Everyone, including the core lottery player and online game fans, are looking for more fun and entertainment value, and games that allow them to compete or collaborate with other players to win a prize, are interesting, exciting and can attract repeat play.

State lotteries with second chance web-based games, will find that as the player fun-factor increases, so too will the number of recreational players making return visits to the lottery web site after each new ticket purchase. For the 24/7 web-based lottery game center, this means new and returning traffic. Web-based multi-media lottery games can be created for virtually any type of game genre including cards, casino-style, word and discovery games, as well as tournament versions of standard games that keep players coming back for more.

Play-by-Play: Connecting Retail Sales to Web Based Game Play

Connecting in-store ticket sales to web-based multi-player games through a second-chance ticket programs can extend the excitement of playing the lottery and double the entertainment value of every lottery ticket purchase.

Second chance game programs all start out with the purchase of a lottery ticket in a store, which turns out to be a non-winning lottery ticket. While the traditional game is over as soon as a player finishes playing the printed version of each game, in states with second chance web-based games, lottery players who have a non-winning ticket are only halfway through the experience.

Players with a non-winning lottery ticket in second chance game play states will have an opportunity to play another game, or to enter tournaments being hosted on the lottery website. Once registered, lottery players can be directed to a specific second chance game linked to the original ticket purchase, or be presented with a menu of single player games like spin the wheel, or multi-player games where card skills, word puzzle ability or trivia knowledge can be used to compete for different prizes.

Facebook-like tools provided in the online game area might allow players to invite friends on the fly, or to arrange a game table in advance, where friends or groups can meet at a designated time to play a competitive game together. This type of multi-person game play will create a social dynamic that reaches far beyond what game fans can find or experience on any social network site. Lotteries can offer popular word, number or card games, multi-media versions of state lottery scratch ticket games, and customized games that are linked to regional/local promotions.

Behind the scenes, everything from player registration, contest administration and web-based game play takes place digitally, and is seamlessly connected to the player-managed user profiles. High-quality game administration software will enable lotteries to provide players with access to their favorite games through personal computers, mobile devices, or in-store lottery terminals. Simple self-service registration software streamlines the age and location verification process and allows lottery players to access the second chance game center through a secure login.

Lotteries working under the premise that every lottery ticket purchased, can actually be two games, (i.e., traditional lottery game printed on the ticket, and a second chance game played online), can create games that appeal to a whole new audience, eager for interactivity and game socializing. Lottery games offered on a lottery website, like second chance winner programs, are a bridge lotteries can start to build today towards a fun interactive web centric future. ♦