Web3 or WTF?

Translating online innovation for a cynical gamer audience

Game developers around the world are infatuated with Web3, but breaking through player cynicism is a major challenge. How does a new player in the space convince legacy gamers that it's more than just a cash grab? Will NFTs really define the future of gaming?

We've taken a deep dive into how Web3 can be integrated into games and what it will take to convince the mainstream gaming audience that the technology **will** improve their playing experiences.

Under Scrutiny

With anything new, there's always going to be uncertainty. The gaming community has been extremely skeptical of NFTs to the point that publishers like EA canceled NFT-related plans after facing substantial backlash. Valve even has a ban on Steam games dealing in cryptocurrency and NFTs.

Gamers are naturally cautious of any form of monetization after the controversy of loot boxes and pay-to-win features with stronger items/upgrades being locked behind microtransaction paywalls.

Some blockchain games have found success as pay-to-earn games - Axie Infinity reportedly peaked at 2.7 million players. However, Naavik's analysis found that the player base treated Axie as a job and didn't personally care for the in-game items. Some feel these games take advantage of people, including Head of Xbox Phil Spencer who stated NFTs in games currently feel: "more exploitative than about entertainment."

Lessons learned

While now commonplace and massively successful, it's easy to forget that it took years to convince gamers to change their previously negative mentality towards free-to-play gaming.

The industry will do the same with NFTs by learning from previous pitfalls and battling those issues in order to create new, invigorating experiences for players.

The opportunity worth fighting for

There's still a chance to convey to players why they should be excited about Web3. But before we walk through the steps to doing just that, let's remind ourselves of the exciting ideas and opportunities on the table.

✦ Web3 games face minimal fees for development, giving creators more freedom and opportunities.

✦ Because of blockchain's interoperability - the ability to virtually exchange information including currency and assets - Web3 developers can create more specific and customizable games for their target audiences.

✦ Not all Web3 games center around NFTs or tokens. In-game rewards can become tokens either as a feature or gifted to players as a bonus.

✦ Players can be given tokens that increase their stake in the game which, in turn, allow them to vote and have a say in the future of the game. These communities are known as Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs).
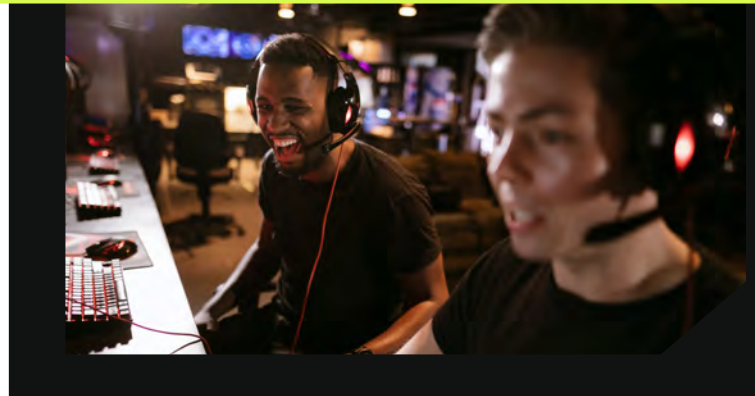
Knowing your audience

While there are multiple categories and subcultures of gamers, let's take a look at some basic archetypes that can be catered for.

Hardcore Gamers

These are the dedicated bunch who spent most of their leisure time playing some form challenge or competitive video game and consider gaming to be integral to their identity. No task is too difficult, no quest is too big.

Midcore Gamers

The broadest of these groups, these players fall anywhere between the hardcore and casual archetype. They might want to get lost in a long, complex story or simply socialize with friends. Midcore players don't necessarily need a challenge to be entertained but they also aren't afraid of a heavier, more-complicated experience.

Casual Gamers

This covers anybody who has a passing interest in gaming but doesn't participate in the hobby for long periods of time. Casual players are more relaxed and want something fun and engaging when they get a bit of spare time, like a few moments of Pokemon Go while out and about or walking the dog.

Building trust

Esports and gaming fans are excellent at sniffing out hogwash, and their trust in your intentions will determine whether you succeed or fail. Their loyalty is vital to your user retention (and thus revenue) - therefore it's essential that you attempt the most difficult thing in the world: do what makes and keeps them happy.

01

Recognize and learn from previous mistakes. Anything rushed or forced will quickly be picked up on, the community wants a game with love and care put into it.

02

Take advantage of Web3 to create an engaging and collaborative experience that's inclusive and has a low barrier of entry. For example, The Sandbox is a metaverse game with a Minecraft-esque world that allows players to create, sell, and trade NFTs on the Ethereum blockchain that can be used to create games on the platform.

03

Prioritize security and be proactive in protecting players. Recent hacks were a strong message about the vulnerability and underlying weakness of current blockchain services, listen to those warnings.

04
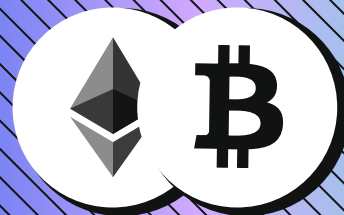
Build games off stablecoins which are impacted by real-world markets to help establish and secure the future of the game.

05

Strive to **achieve a good balance** between providing players with rewards and maintaining a positive in-game experience.

Getting gamers on board with Web3

While there'll always be interest in games offering players tangible and economic rewards, every type of gamer cares more about intangible values such as entertainment or socializing. Rather than making play-to-earn the sole purpose of a game, attracting a wider audience means that crypto should build on an already amazing experience to create a play-**and**-earn title.

Of course, you can't simply pluck an amazing game out of thin air. So how else can you convince gamers to get on board with NFTs and Web3's benefits?

Nobody's ever going to say no to a free gift. Esports organization 100 Thieves proved that gamers can take an interest in NFTs as over 700,000 competitive gaming fans claimed their own free NFT to commemorate the organization's recent title win.

Appeal to collectors and traders. CS:GO's online market is proof players are already interested in owning, trading, and selling cosmetic goods.

Give players a return for the time they invest, similar to how hardcore League of Legends players strive for elusive high ranks every season to represent all those hours of grind.

Use NFTs to attract achievement hunters by transforming virtual trophies into functioning rewards that offer players additional benefits such as access to certain events or cosmetics.

Allow player ownership over their own creations similar to The Sandbox. Community-driven games such as Media Molecule's Dreams and its player base could benefit massively from this.

Allow players to retain their assets in new iterations of games. For example, Web3 could allow NBA 2K players to transition cosmetic items they unlocked for their created character to the latest version of the annual franchise.

Conclusion

You may have noticed these tips include a lot of examples from current games. That's because gamers are already benefiting from these features that will soon be further enhanced by Web3. Players just need to be informed on these concepts and given the chance to experience these benefits for themselves.

As Ubisoft's Strategic Innovations Lab VP Nicolas Pouard points out, video games can always add additional value on top of the playing experience:

"In Assassin's Creed, you learn about history, and we worked on experiments in old games where you could learn new soft skills. So, a game can be a lot of things and can bring a lot of things to players. Adding a real-world value reward might be the next addition on top of all the value a game already offers."

NFTs are one of the largest obstacles to overcome to achieve the next level of gaming BUT gamers never shy away from a challenge especially when it is in an exciting title with excellent gameplay.

Soon enough, a captivating game that strongly benefits from Web3's advantages will blow gamers' minds and explode in popularity. Somebody just needs to unlock that potential.

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Looking to build a meaningful connection with gamers?

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