ESG Gaming Discovery Sprint Report

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September 2023





Introduction

This report documents the contents, thinking and outputs of the two-day Discovery Sprint workshop ran in August 2023 for ESG Gaming by MDRx.

In these workshops, MDRx worked with ESG Gaming to understand, learn & analyse the current gaming industry and the initial vision set by ESG Gaming, with the aim to create a high-level strategy, experience, and direction for a proposed product.

Initially, one core product idea emerged and was developed during the workshops – the **in-game skills toolkit** (phase 02) which delivers badges during gameplay, rewarding Gen Z players for soft skills they demonstrate, that have applicability in the working world.

Following the workshops, an additional idea which further supports ESG Gaming's vision was proposed to progress, alongside phase 02. The **gaming for good portal** (phase 01) which provides young people, parents and older generations with educational material and shared experiences around gameplay and gaming features.

MDRx look forward to working collaboratively with ESG Gaming to further develop these two product phases.







Our Aim

The aim of this discovery sprint engagement was to:



Craft a product concept



Present background research on the market



Develop a high level user journey



Analyse product market fit



Define the business model





Attendees



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Attendees



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Contents

Terms and definitions	Align on key terms within technology and gaming and their definitions
Industry trends and problem areas	Understand the current industry trends within gaming and the associated problem areas
Decision criteria	Select and prioritise decision criteria to consider when choosing a particular problem to address
Users, buyers, problems	Identify all the potential users, buyers and problems associated with gaming and prioritise our target for all
Crafting a vision	Outline a potential solution for the problem; what success looks like; and what hypotheses we have to prove trueor false to achieve success
User experience	A user's persona and experience as they encounter the problem space or interact with the product
Funding and monetization	Understand the funding and monetization strategies to explore

TERNS AND DEFINITIONS







Key terms: Tech

Metaverse: We define the metaverse very simply as the melding of digital and physical capabilities. However, it's also often defined as a 3D enabled digital space that can use virtual reality, augmented reality and other advanced internet and semiconductor technology to allow people to have lifelike personal and business experiences online.

AR: Augmented reality uses technology to add or augment a person's view of reality with a computer-generated image. For example, Pokémon Go or the IKEA furniture placement app.



(3) Web3 offers the possibility for digital

worlds to be built on decentralised

platforms (e.g., decentraland)

(in theory) be decentralized, democratic and peer-to- peer. **Blockchain:** A distributed ledger –

Web3: New version of the web, built on blockchains, that would

ie., a database hosted by a network of computers instead of a single server - that offers users an immutable and transparent way to store information. It is the backbone for Web3 technologies like cryptocurrencies and NFTs

Cryptocurrency: A form of currency that doesn't rely on a central bank, government, or other intermediaries. Technically, it's software that runs on blockchains. There are currently thousands of cryptocurrencies, but the most common include Bitcoin and Ether

VR: Virtual reality does not include a physical world component (besides a handset or other equipment such as a helmet or sensor-laden gloves). In VR, users enter a computer-generated simulation but can interact with it in a way that seems real. For example, Google Daydream and Google Expeditions.

Non-fungible tokens (NFTs): An NFT is a digital deed representing ownership over a unique digital object. These objects commonly include artwork or digital versions of collectibles, such as the illustrated avatars of the Bored Ape Yacht Club or Time magazine covers. They are authenticated on a blockchain.



Key terms: Gaming

Gaming: Playing any type of single or multiplayer commercial digital game via internet-connected devices, including dedicated consoles, desktop computers, laptops, tablets and mobile phones. There are many differenttypes of video games.

E-sports: Form of gaming. Professional or semi-professional competitive gaming in an organised format (tournament or league) with a specific goal/prize, such as winning a championship title or prize money. Engages with the influencer world and is often corporately sponsored.

Gambling: Activity where someone risks money or belongings. There is an element of randomness or chance involved and the purpose is to win.



Streaming: Activity where people broadcast themselves playing games to a live audience online, which can be for educational or entertainment purposes.

Streaming: Allows gamers to play video games on a mobile device or low-power PC by streaming the content from the Internet.

Gaming monetization: Some gaming monetization strategies including loot boxes, skin betting, esports betting and social casino play, incorporate practices from gambling, raising increasing attention amongst regulators.

Skin betting: A player can purchase or win a skin within a game to change the appearance of their character. Skins can sometimes cost varying amounts of money, which can make some skins appear more valuable than others. Skin betting is when players use their skins to bet on online games against opponents.

Loot boxes: Mystery boxes containing a random selection of unknown items which can be purchased with real money, or credits built up within a game to reveal the contents.



INDUSTRY TRENDS AND PROBLEM AREAS









Industry Trends



The video gaming market is already big at \$227b and prominent projections show it growing fast, predicted to grow to \$312b, with a compound annual growth rate of almost 8%. Advertising and social / casual gaming is projected to drive growth whilst 'traditional' gaming stays flat (pwc, Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2023-2027)

12 million DAU

Roblox, with 55m daily active users (DAU), dominates the metaverse gaming segment, which skews young (38% below 20 and 74% below 35), and male (59%); the number of users just keeps increasing – by 12m daily active user in 2022/2023 (Roblox, 2023)



The games industry trade body UK Interactive Entertainment (Ukie) launched a £1m public information campaign after a government engagement exercise on the >\$15b loot box segment

(UK Government, 2023)







DECISION CRITERIA

-057









Prioritising decision criteria

As demonstrated on page 12 'Problem areas', the problem space associated with gaming is vast and therefore we need to bring the focus to a specific problematic attribute of gaming we wish to address. In order to help with this decision of picking a particular problem, it is useful to establish and understand what criteria would affect the decision when choosing between certain problems to address; and what decision criteria will be used to judge the feasibility of addressing and solving a certain problem over another.

MDRx presented ESG with 6 common and relevant decision criteria which, when in practice, help to establish 'if we chose X problem':

- How long would it take for the solution to make an impact (Time scale for impact)
- Are there interested funders for addressing this problem? (Likelihood of funding)
- How many stakeholders would solving this problem affect? (Scale of impact)
- Does the solution to this problem require the use of complex or emerging technology? (Technology)
- How accessible are the users we would require to test the solution to the problems? (Access to users)
- How legally complex is the problem area to navigate and address? (Legal complexity)

The goal was to discuss the criteria, add or remove any, and then rank the chosen criteria, from the most important to the least important, when making a decision as to which problem in gaming we wish to address.





SG

Prioritising decision criteria

ESG chose to move forward with the below decision criteria highlighting the likelihood of funding and the scale of the problem as the most important criteria to consider when selecting a problem to address. From the original criteria presented, access to users and technology were removed; legal complexity was changed to legal relevance; and the individual impact of the problem was added.









Mapping the problem areas onto decision criteria

Exercise

Having reviewed and prioritised the decision criteria, we were able to explore and identify which problem areas, as presented on page 11 'Problem areas', provide the best opportunities to address and achieve our priorities of impact.

MDRx presented two-dimensional decision criteria projections, where the placement of each problem type is determined by its desirability, with higher positions being more favorable.

MDRx discussed with ESG to assess the position of each problem type on these projections, considering the evidence presented during the industry and problem area review.







Impact per person*





Access to users / legal simplicity











Funds available*

*No scale implied; inferred from available evidence





Breakdown of funding groups

The below list breaks down the groups identified as likely funders on page 19 'Likelihood of funding', to provide further detail as to who exactly the funding party could be:

Third and Research sectors

- Not for Profit
- Academics

Care providers

- Social care
- Care homes
- Clinicians
- Medical professionals

Public stewards

- DCMS
- Innovate UK
- DWP

Amateur gamers and loved ones

- Consumers of games
- Parents of gamers

Technology companies (See next page)









Breakdown of funding groups – Technology companies in gaming

Production

Independent developers

Studios:

- Tencent
- PlayStation Studios
- Xbox Game Studios
- NetEase
- Activision Blizzard
- Nintendo
- Electronic Arts

Distribution

Distributors:

- Apple App Store
- Google Play
- Steam
- Xbox Games Store
- PlayStation store
- Nintendo eShop
- Epic Games Store
- GOG

Consumption

Mobiles:

- Apple (30%)
- Samsung Galaxy (24%)

Tablets:

- iPad (55%)
- Galaxy Tab (28%)

PCs:

- Lenovo (24%)
- HP (20%)

Consoles and wearables:

- Nintendo Switch
- PlayStation 4 & 5
- Xbox One & X/S

USERS, BUYERS AND PROBLEMS







Prioritising decision criteria

The "user" is the person who actively uses your product to make progress, yet they may not necessarily be the one paying for it.

The "buyer" is the decision-maker responsible for purchasing your product, which comes with a set of expectations.

Understanding all potential users and buyers within the gaming industry is crucial. It's important to note that these roles aren't always distinct; a user can also be the buyer, so it's important to establish the difference.

A comprehensive understanding of the market's makeup allows for the identification of predominant groups, which, in turn, informs the types of issues that may need addressing.

MDRx and ESG spent 10 minutes in compiling a list of potential users, buyers, and their respective characteristics in the gaming industry, subsequently sorting them into the clear categories of 'Potential Users' and 'Potential Buyers'.





Exercise outputs – users and buyers

Identified users, buyers and characteristics in the workshop:











Exercise outputs – users and buyers

Below are the all the users, buyers and characteristics identified by the group in the workshop, grouped into related segments:

POTENTIAL USERS

Over 65s; Older population; Dementia sufferers; Retired professionals; Lonely or isolated people; Nursing home residents

Professional parents; Single parents; Trauma/Lived experienced parents; Parents in the tech industry

Gen Z; 18 – 35 y/o; Youth living outside of home; Youth living with guardians; Influencers; Safety and content moderation employees

Very young children; Children in social care; Children up to 18 y/o

Characteristics: Seeking escapism; Seeking like-minded individuals; Full time education/training; Seeking social experiences; Gaming is their source of entertainment

POTENTIAL BUYERS

Vocational training programmes; After-school programmes; Schools; Youth clubs

Parents of Gamers ; Parents of Gen Z; Parents of very young children

Hardware makers; Games makers; Games publishers; Gaming distributors

Trade bodies; MP; Government; Professional bodies

ASA; Regulators; Lawyers

NHS; Health providers; Social care homes; Health insurance providers







Defining the problem

The problems associated with gaming are vast and span areas such as Health, Economics and Online Harms, therefore we need to bring the focus to a specific problematic behaviour we are addressing within the gaming industry.

Identifying all the associated problems, helps to inform and understand how, if at all, each problem impacts the users identified in the Users and Buyers exercise.

MDRx and ESG spent 10 minutes writing down all the problems associated with the gaming industry; following which these were grouped into 2 segments that emerged from the exercise; 'Problems associated with gaming' and 'Problems gaming could address'.





Exercise outputs – problem

Identified problems in the workshop:









Exercise outputs – Problem

While working on the exercise, it became evident that the issues compiled by the team could be categorised into two groups: challenges related to gaming itself; and difficulties encountered, especially by the older generation which might find solutions through gaming. Below are the problems identified in the workshop, grouped into related segments:

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH GAMING

Gambling mechanisms within gaming; Users being misled by gambling mechanisms and advertisements; In-game purchases; Loot boxes; Dark patterns leading to economic harm/financial loss; In-game exposure to harmful content

Lack of visibility of children's gaming activity; Lack of education around harms and protection

- Lack of regulation
- Physical health affected; Mental health affected; Depression
- Social isolation; Lack of real world connections and experiences; Worse social skills due to gaming

Lack of representation; Inequality; Mysogony; Harassment (gender, race, religion, ability); Peer Pressure; Threatening in- game actions

PROBLEMS GAMING COULD ADDRESS

Depression; Dementia

Loneliness; Lacking a sense of belonging; Social isolation

Unfamiliarity with technology

Reduced motor skills; Reduced mind stimulation

CRAFTING A VISION FOR THE PRODUCT









News story Exercise

We want to understand the vision for the product and what would make it a success.

By establishing this, it helps to inform what sorts of opportunities we want to enable with the product and starts to introduce potential solutions to the problem, that could achieve the desired success.

An interesting way of shaping this and focusing on the desired outcome is to write a future news article as if the product has been launched – by doing this you can articulate what your product did, who it impacted and why it was such a success. This helps to package up the product concept.

MDRx and ESG had 10 minutes to craft a news article or press release set in the future (after the launch of the product) and play it back to the rest of the group.





Exercise outputs – news story

3 groupings of 3 ideas that arose out of the news story playbacks:









Exercise outputs – news story

The outcomes and initial product ideas, which are listed out below, from the group's press releases were quite distinct, however, they all highlighted that the product needs to work alongside the gaming industry to highlight the positive behaviours that can be fostered through gaming, rather than a product that would work against the industry. The idea that was chosen to progress encompassing our targeted user and problem was Idea 02.

IDEA 01 'GAMING FOR GOOD PORTAL'

Support community/forum for parents to gain knowledge and visibility on their children's gaming experience

Parents can assess the gaming experience and provide ratings for safety of content, as well as for positive attributes that are associated with gaming features.

Would provide increased connections and shared experiences between parents and children so that gaming is enriching lives rather than taking over

IDEA 02 'IN-GAME SKILLS TOOLKIT'

A toolkit integrated into popular games to teach and improve social skills

Partnering with gaming companies

The toolkit would benefit corporates and employers looking to build up social and digital skills in their workforce





Initial product concept

Following the exercises identifying the potential users, buyers, problems and vision (news story) for the product, the group were able to identify the key targets for each of these areas and therefore the basis for the product concept, which is summarised below:

USER

Members of Gen Z who are entering the workplace: We provide a means of proving that they are employable.

BUYER

Large corporate employers who need to recruit employees with soft skills and who want to be seen to keep up with the times: We provide a means of evaluating a new generation (or those re-entering the workforce) and a billboard in a brandnew space.

PROBLEMS ADDRESSED

The key problem to address is the reduced social skills and real-world connections/experiences due to constant gaming and the impact this can have on Gen Z's employability. By improving social skills and social awareness, the solution also has the potential to target two further problems associated with gaming – harassment and bullying within gaming; and inequality and lack of representation in gaming.

VISION – taken from Idea 2 on page 32

Partnering with games publishers, a toolkit for real life social skills development embedded into existing games to improve the social skills of a generation who have had these threatened, heavily due to COVID lockdown, and to therefore appeal to Corporates looking to hire strong candidates.







Hypothesis generation Exercise

A hypothesis is an assumption we make about the product we are going to use to solve our problem. It is something we believe to be true but needs to be tested to prove it is true. We aim to write them in the form **"We believe that by... we can... because..."**

They help us understand potential pitfalls and generate new insights.

Hypotheses can be tested in different ways primarily in the build phase of the product but also through initial user interviews and research.

Using our identified target problem and proposed solution, the group had 10 minutes to frame the hypotheses using the above format. Following this, the hypotheses were grouped as below, and methods of testing were discussed.

Hypotheses related to:

- Corporate employers' interest and incentive to interact with the problem space and solution
- Gaming industry's interest and incentive to interact with the problem space and solution
- Gen Z's interest and incentive to interact with the problem space and solution
- How gaming could impact the social skills of the user





ESG Gaming

Identified hypotheses in the workshop:

CORPORATE EMPLOYERS' INTEREST AND INCENTIVE TO INTERACT WITH THE PROBLEM SPACE AND SOLUTION

- We believe that Gen Z's lack of real-world social skills is a compelling problem for employers
- We believe that large corporate employers will pay for novel ways of upskilling their younger workers.
- We believe that if candidates have a validated certification demonstrating their efforts to improve social skills, they will be more attractive to employers because this skillset is under threat since COVID.
- We believe that large corporates who are interested in DEI will find value in an engaging tool that helps
 - level up social skills for Gen Z members from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- We believe that millennial managers will be relieved by having an engaging mechanism for upskilling their junior reports.
- We believe that employers would favour a City & Guilds accreditation.
- We believe that corporations will likely take on young people who have some form of accredited work experience.
- We believe that big corporations want to get their names into popular platforms in order to recruit the next generation but aren't sure of the best ways to go about it.
- We believe that big recruiters will find these certifications useful.
- We believe that an accreditation would be adopted by influential employers.

Methods of testing our hypotheses:

- There is already significant research to support that social skills are under threat and that this is a problem for employers
- Interviews with employers and recruiters – what do they look for, what standards and methods do they use to judge social skills, what language is used in job specifications
- Interviews with employers as to their interest in engaging with the metaverse



HOW GAMING COULD IMPACT THE SOCIAL SKILLS OF THE USER

- We believe that game publishers will be interested in something that increases the civility/decreases harassment within their games.
- We believe that gaming studios and platforms would promote accreditation opportunities.
- We believe that graduates from esports courses would benefit from greater awareness on how to apply their skills from gaming.
- We believe that increasing social skills through can reduce harassing behaviours both in and out of the gaming environment because Gen Z will learn more social awareness and complexities.
- We believe that Gen Z chasing accreditations would promote better social behaviours within gaming
- We believe that we can design a curriculum that does not promote bad behaviour.

GEN Z'S INTERESTAND INCENTIVE TO INTERACT WITH THE PROBLEM SPACE AND SOLUTION

- We believe that Gen Z members will find value in an accreditation that helps them get a job, that is fun to complete.
- We believe that Gen Z are interested in ways to increase their employability because of competitive hiring markets and hiring bias.
- We believe that Gen Z gamers would chase accreditations for social skills in gaming.
- We believe that Gen Z would not want their gaming experience disrupted by educational content.

Methods of testing our hypotheses:

- Interviews with gaming companies
- Interviews with UKIE
- Interviews with esports players

Methods of testing our hypotheses:

 Interviews with Gen Z members, using a real concept/storyboard





GAMING INDUSTRY'S INTEREST AND INCENTIVE TO INTERACT WITH THE PROBLEM SPACE AND SOLUTION

- We believe that we can create a plugin for popular games that will successfully teach members of Gen Z real world soft skills.
- We believe that gaming can be beneficial for growing social skills because of the teamwork, collaboration and strategy involved.
- We believe that we can set standards for soft skills useful in the workforce and evaluate them.
- We believe that accreditations will reflect these standards.
- We believe that we can design game integrations that successfully teach social skills.
- We believe that we can accurately test whether someone has learnt and can put into practice these skills.
- We believe that the learnt skills will accurately translate into the real world.

Methods of testing our hypotheses:

- Review existing employability standards
- Interviews with gaming feature experts and content moderation teams
- Tracking gaming characteristics against certain types of behaviours
- Integrate the social standards into HR systems and CDP conversations, are they being ticked off by employees





USER EXPERIENCE





ESG Gaming

Lightning demos

In order to get an idea and inspiration of what sort of concept, features and functionality we want our users to interact with in our product and what direction we want to take, it is useful to review related concepts and case studies to identify what you like about them and what you dislike about them.

Following the development of the idea for an in-game skills development toolkit that improves social skills and could benefit the corporate employment space, it was identified that in order to have valuable real-world application, the user would want something that certifies that they have improved in a certain skill, to subsequently demonstrate this to potential employers.

MDRx wanted to talk through websites and products relating to how corporates currently train and evaluate soft skills in their employees; alongside exploring the methods by which employees can obtain certified accreditation from training and effectively showcase their qualifications.

- MDRx presented the below sources:
- LinkedIn badges for certifications
- <u>B Cert Me badge validation</u>
- Mishcon Academy for in-house learning and skill development (internal access only)
- <u>BCS</u>





Lightning demo case studies bcs Community About us Making IT good for society Training providers Employers Educators Login to MyBCS **Licenses & certifications** Membership & registrations 🗸 IT careers 🗸 Qualifications & certifications 🗸 Events & awards 🗸 Articles, opinion & research 🗸 Q Home / Qualifications and certifications / Certifications for professional Certified ScrumMaster® (CSM®) Scrum Alliance Certifications for IT professionals Issued Jan 2022 · Expires Jan 2024 Develop your IT skills with a BCS qualification; improve and validate your Credential ID 1520249 competence and the value you bring to your organisation. Show credential C S Designed by industry experts, highly relevant in today's Ch Globally recognised - certification delivered in 200+ marketplace countries Built on our 30-year reputation for exam quality, S Aligned with the leading industry skills framework, S SFIAplus integrity and impartiality Skills: Project Management **BCS** professional LinkedIn certification certifications badge display Our professional certifications portfolio MISHCON ACADEMY Search Q Refine search results by Catalogue Certified ScrumMaster* (CSM*) - CERTIFIED BADD Format Rosanna Gray ~ E These are all the Courses/ Learning Series/ Learning Programmes/ Resources available to you. Use the Sort By: Recently Published Badge ID 1520249 Activity filters on the left to refine your search. Issued By Blended Denver, CO, US Location 01/25/2022 In-person classroon Issue Date 01/25/2024 On-demand content ON-DEMAND CONTENT Holding a C s knowledge and ability Virtual classroom https://bcert.me/spcxprim This Barloe is to support Scrun MANDATORY Skills ÷ The CSM certifican My Skills The Non-negotiables: Global · Adheres to Scrum as it is defined in the Scrum Guid Associate Phishing BOPs - All Levels PDF Docs sanctions (Group Entity) Core Skills · Works to remove team and organizational impediment Early Careers Complete Emerging and experienced B Cert Me badge validation and careers - Level 1 provenance

Mishcon de Reya in-house learning Academy portal





Exercise outputs – lightning demos

MDRx took ESG through the websites listed on page 40 and the below are the elements that ESG liked and disliked. These thoughts can be considered when developing ESG's product further.

LIKES

- The use of digital badges for skill accreditation that can be shared and displayed
- Tracking of progress of badges for a user
- Tracking of all users with certain badges
- Creativity of curriculum
- Multiple learning modules for a particular skill
- Not limited to soft skills

DISLIKES

- Boring UI
- Corporate feel
- Looks like learning materials
- Hard to navigate where to go on the sites



Gaming



User personas Exercise

Whilst we have identified the general target user we want to impact with our product, it is important to delve further into this user group to establish the characteristics, needs, behaviours, and attitudes of the users so we can improve the product or service accordingly.

This is done through creating a persona for the ideal user who is impacted by our problem at hand – reduced social skills and real-world connections/experiences due to constant gaming and the impact this can have on Gen Z's employability.

As a group we came up with a list of characteristics, needs, behaviours, and attitudes for our target user.





Exercise outputs – user persona

CLIVES WITH PARENTS
GENZ "WANTS to 6 Et out OF
· ENTERING WE SOON
· AWATS ON DEVICES . INTEREST IN GAMING.
· SEEKING + CREATING DIGITAL EXPERIENCES
+ENGREING SOCIALLY PHOSE WITH OTHERS ANOUND PHOSE EXPERIENCES
· HAVE HAD FEW JOBS IF ANY - TROBABLY NO
AWARE THEAT THERE'S COMPETITION
COUDUSE & CONFIDENCE BUILDER DESP. REGARDING PECISIONING
· DON'T NEC. HOW WHAT CAREER PATH TO FOLLOW BEHIND ON DOD APP. PRICEPS
· POTENTIALLY NEARODINGRSE · WHAT DO INFEED TO KNOW THAT I DIDN'T LEARN AT UNI? · WANT TO LEARN SKILLS THAT NOW LOO OUT OF DATE

The characteristics, needs, behaviours, and attitudes of our target user identified in the workshop:





Exercise outputs – user persona

A list of the age, characteristics, needs, behaviours, and attitudes of our target user identified in the workshop are listed out below:

- A member of Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2012)
- Living at home with parents
- Seeking escapism from home
- Always on devices
- Seeking and creating digital experiences
- Engaging socially with others around those digital experiences
- Interested in gaming
- Entering the workforce soon
- Lacking in professional experience
- Lacking significant job history

- Aware that there is competition in the job market
- Experiencing CV anxiety
- Lacking in confidence to apply for jobs
- Intimidated by the job market
- Unaware of what career path to take
- Behind on job application process
- Potentially neurodiverse
- Seeking skills that won't go out of date







User journey mapping Exercise

By creating a user journey map, it enables us to get into the mindset of the user, illuminate pain points and identify opportunities to create new or improved user experiences.

As an output you get an end to end experience journey reflecting how the user encounters your problem space or interacts with your product, specifically how they:

- Think about it
- Find out about it
- Evaluate it
- Try it
- Do more with it
- Tell others about it





Exercise outputs – user journey mapping

A depiction of the user journey map created during the workshop:









Imran is worried about his next step. His peers are all applying for competitive internships.



An adaptation of the user journey map created during the workshop into storyboard form:

But how can he prove he has the skills they're asking for? Feeling a bit depressed about it all, he quits the application process and escapes into a game.



Imran has been playing Rocket League for a few years now, and he's made it to team leader because he's good at rallying people to work together.



Once he's finished playing, he checks his email to see if he's had any luck with his applications. Instead, there's an email from Rocket League saying that he's eligible for an employment skills badge.



On the ESG Gaming website he learns that exciting employers value the skills he's learned from gaming. He could earn other badges in different games.



Imran is prompted to join LinkedIn, where he adds his KPMG-sponsored leadership badge. A recruiter sees it and contacts him to talk about a summer internship.



In the interview, the hiring manager is pleasantly surprised to find that the gaming badge has translated into real- world social skills. Imran is a keeper!

FUNDING AND MONETIZATION

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More funders

The below is a list of potential funders identified in the workshop; as well as what we see as their potential incentive for funding ESG's product:

Corporate employers – business leaders report a lack of soft skills amongst Generation Z workers. Recruitment processes, especially in engineering, research, and financial services, are getting longer despite high vacancy rates. Evaluating soft skills in applicants without traditional extra-curriculars can be challenging, disproportionately affecting people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Corporates are looking for opportunities to contribute to their CSR and to increase their brand awareness, especially in innovative areas like gaming.

Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation – their mission is to support and enable game changing and commercially viable R&D innovation that can significantly impact the UK economy. ESG's proposal to use gaming to increase the employability and skillsets of Generation Z workers poses a strong alignment with their mission due to the impact it would have on the UK workforce and therefore economy.







Who funds it and why?

- High Net Worth individuals there are individuals with lived experience of the effects of gambling and gaming who would welcome the opportunity to create and promote a positive and safe gaming ecosystem to benefit others.
- Government particularly within the Department for Work and Pensions, the Government provides grants for initiatives that get more people into employment which ESG's product proposes to do.
- Trusts city livery firms sponsor programmes supporting disadvantaged communities and their access to employment support, ESG's product would provide this opportunity.
- Gaming developers supporting inclusive employment whilst promoting positive play could be a welcome positive news story given recent political interest. Reducing antisocial gaming behaviours may also increase gaming engagement amongst players.
- VR headset manufacturers the level of engagement and immersion in a game environment via VR is highly enhanced. For these social environments to grow safely, the people who use them need to better understand how to treat the people around them online.





Monetization

The principal method of monetization of the product identified in the workshop and therefore to be explored was through Corporate employers.

Corporate employers could pay ESG Gaming on an annual basis to sponsor a specific skill that is being promoted and improved through game play; and therefore have the right to brand the badge that is earned by the user on development of that skill.

The cost of the sponsorship will depend on the type of skill being sponsored.

The type of skill can be matched to the type of corporate e.g. negotiation skills can be sponsored by Banks, communication and strategy skills can be sponsored by Consultancies, teamwork skills can be sponsored by Sports Clubs.

In addition to the idea of receiving a corporate branded badge, users could earn additional

incentives related to that corporate employer e.g. work experience, internships.

RELEVANT RESEARCH AND REFERENCES



Negative outcomes for game players

- Gaming is associated with negative outcomes for players in social and economic wellbeing, and health (1)
- Both game and gamer characteristics are associated with negative consequences of gaming (2) but causal relationships to health outcomes are actively debated (3)
- Core features of popular 'Play to Earn' web3 games (earning points, managing in-game resources) are also those rated most highly by problem gamers (4)
- Digital convergence and 'gamblification' has blurred boundaries between gambling & gaming, with the rise of gambling and gaming ecosystems (5)
- 1. Problem Gaming: A Short Primer, Green et al., 2018
- 2. An Overview of Structural Characteristics in Problematic Video Game Playing, Griffiths et al., 2017
- 3. A weak scientific basis for gaming disorder: Let us err on the side of caution, van Rooij et al., 2018
- 4. Understanding the mechanics and consumer risks associated with play-to-earn (P2E) gaming, King et al., 2022
- 5. The evolution of young gambling studies: digital convergence of gaming, gambling and cryptocurrency technologies, King et al., 2023









Game and gamer characteristics associated with problem gaming

- Some characteristics are more associated with problem gamers e.g., personality traits like impulsivity (1)
- Some of these characteristics are also associated with participation in gambling-like activity (2)

- 1. Novel approaches for treating Internet Gaming Disorder: A review of technology-based interventions
- 2. A scoping review of the association between loot boxes, esports, skin betting, and token wagering with gambling and video gaming behaviours





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Gen Z social skills for the workplace

Generation Z, born 1997 – 2012, are the largest cohort entering the workplace. Gen Z:

- Game a lot and more than almost all previous generations (similar to millennials)
- Are more diverse across protected characteristics than any previous generation
- Report more mental health issues than any previous generation by a significant margin
- Have less work experience than previous generations
- Choose digital over in-person communication in more cases than any other generation
- Their lack of opportunity to develop skills has been exacerbated by COVID-19 restrictions
- Are increasingly likely to be managed by millennials, who themselves game a lot
- At least three of the 'big four' accounting firms have revealed they have specific soft skills training for Gen Z





Social skills in gaming

- Several academic sources hypothesise that Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs) provide opportunities for players to develop and demonstrate social skills
- Players seem to acquire important prosocial skills when they play games that are specifically designed to reward effective cooperation, support, and helping behaviours
- Engaged gamers experience optimal enjoyment more frequently and value the importance of social interactions more than non-engaged gamers
- A systematic analysis in 2021 suggested that serious games may improve social skills when used alongside in-person discussion
- Harassment is widely reported in social gaming experiences across demographic groups and games





References for 'Gen Z social skills for the workplace' on page 57 and 'Social skills in gaming' on page 58

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Skills development in games

TYPE OF GAME	GAME EXAMPLE	SKILLS/CHARACTERISTICS
MMORPG (Role play)	Dungeons and Dragons World of Warcraft	Cooperative play Communication Strategy development Decision making as a team Problem solving Leadership Negotiation
Strategy	Civilisation Age of Empires	Critical thinking Planning ahead Strategic thinking Negotiation with opposing team Resource coordination
Sports	FIFA Madden NFL	Hand eye coordination Reaction time Communication Teamwork Leadership
Puzzle	Tetris Candy Crush	Problem solving Quick thinking Logical reasoning Mental agility
Simulation	The Sims Animal Crossing	Empathy Understanding of complexities of social interactions

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