



Gamers are Givers: Using Charitable Games to Fundraise for Your Nonprofit

By Steve Kane

Since the first computer games appeared in the 1970s, digital games have provided people from all walks of life with a sense of community and an accessible form of entertainment offering endless fun and relaxation. Digital games have now grown in popularity and ubiquity to where they are arguably the most popular form of entertainment in history.

Given their omnipresence, it's exciting to consider how game companies can harness their immense reach and power to create community and social good, and how nonprofits can utilize games as platforms to fundraise and connect with small donors.

The intersection of philanthropy and games is not new. Game lovers consistently use play to support good causes by teaming up with organizations like Gamers Without Borders, which brought together top e-sport athletes to contribute \$10 million to global vaccine distribution, as well as Epic Games and Xbox, which raised \$144 million in humanitarian aid for Ukraine.

However, gaming companies' ability to leverage their wares and altruistic player bases to create systems of continuous fundraising for nonprofits remains largely unexplored. Similar to the way Amazon integrated philanthropic giving through Amazon Smile, games companies can embed philanthropic giving into their platforms by giving players the opportunity to donate to their favorite charities while playing games. That way, games can function as front-end fundraising tools for nonprofits. And these tools are "always on" as are the games themselves.

What's unique about the opportunity charitable giving presents through games is that an enormous part of the population is already playing online games. In fact, approximately 227 million Americans play such games, meaning around 70% of the population already engages with technologies holding the potential to become fundraising tools.

Equally compelling, the largest source of charitable giving in 2021 came from individuals, not corporations or foundations, at \$326.87 billion, or 67% of total U.S. giving. So there simply must be an immense overlap between the folks giving the most to charity and those who play online games — individuals like you and me.

Additionally, players feel deep satisfaction connecting their leisure activities to giving back. According to the Charities Aid Foundation, gamers are interested not only in the philanthropic initiatives of gaming companies but in using games themselves as platforms for giving. So, a games company that integrates philanthropy directly into its model will likely reap rewards in enhanced player loyalty and engagement, and nonprofits utilizing these games will see a consistent stream of incoming donations.

For nonprofits, harnessing the support of small donors has always been a perennial challenge due to limited staffing and resources. However, the benefits of small donor funding are huge, tried and true, and accessing the astonishing 3.24 billion online gamers worldwide is an exciting opportunity.

For example, reliable, low-cost funding from a variety of small donors, rather than occasional lump-sums from a major foundation, allows a nonprofit — particularly a small one — to be more resilient and independent while less beholden to events, whims and limited sources. Plus, small donors are often directly connected to the community the nonprofit serves while also being more comfortable with unrestricted giving.

Such a diversified, trusting donor base creates a healthier, sturdier nonprofit, as well as a more democratic philanthropic model and, ultimately, society. When gamers also happen to be givers, the case to tap into this donor base is self-evident.

As the methods for charitable giving and fundraising continue to evolve, like we're seeing with the use of cryptocurrency as an alternate way to support social causes, nonprofits can and should adapt — and, as a result, will prosper. The fast-paced nature of these changes may seem daunting to nonprofits, but with charitable games available right now, there is an opportunity to bolster donor bases without stretching resources — a solution that nonprofits have been exploring for decades.

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