

THE PERFECT PIVOT:

TURNING PLAYER PROBLEMS INTO OPPORTUNITIES

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MASTERS OF ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY MANAGEMENT

CAN YOU TURN CRISIS INTO IMPROVEMENT?

TODAY, YOU'LL LEARN FROM TWO EXAMPLES
OF PIVOTING IN CRISIS TO DRIVE IMPROVED
EXPERIENCES.

AGENDA

Scenario 1:
Live Incident

Scenario 2:
Player Sentiment

Takeaway Tips

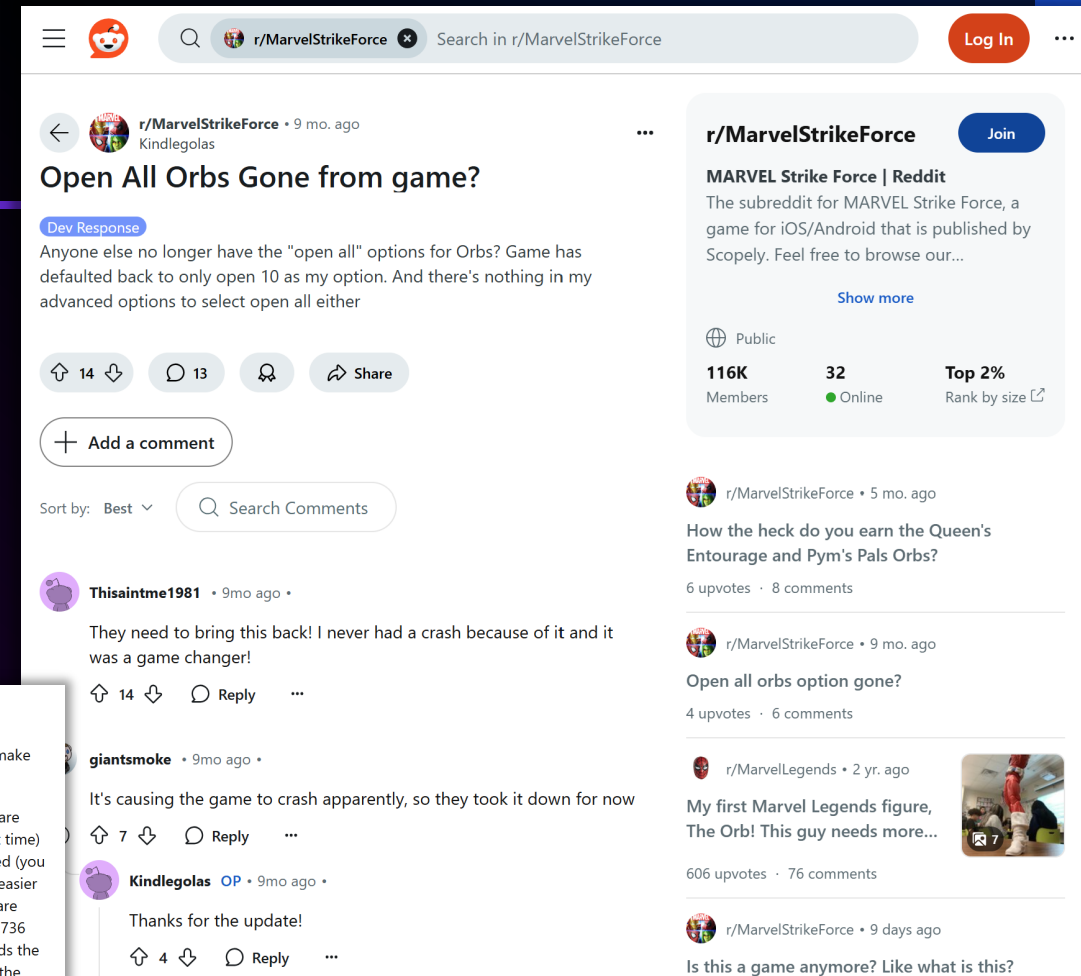
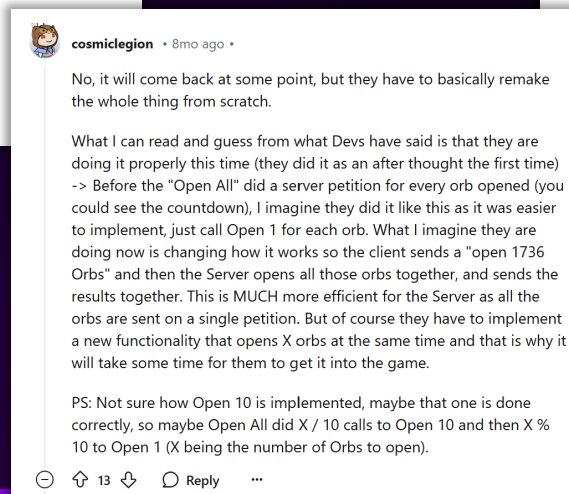
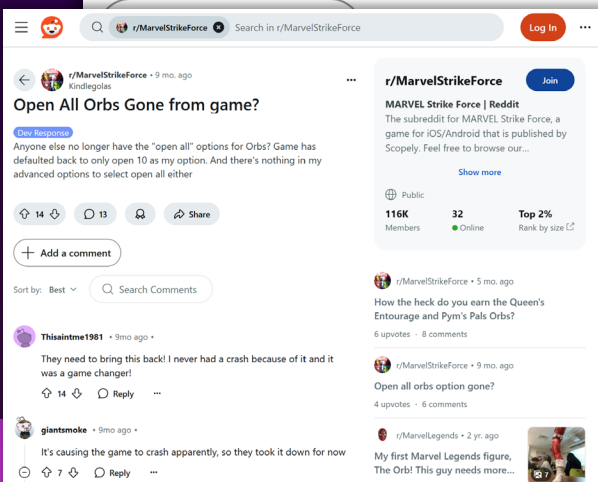
Learn More

SCENARIO 1:

LIVE INCIDENT

ORB REDEMPTION
MARVEL STRIKE FORCE
SCOPELY, INC.

HOW DO YOU TURN THIS..



INTO THIS?

r/MarvelStrikeForce

Search in r/MarvelStrikeForce

Log In

r/MarvelStrikeForce • 4 mo. ago

TheSFactor44

OPEN ALL ORBS!!!!!!!

Discussion

I went to the store and had a bunch of blitz orb tokens. I believe it was 365 orange orbs. I was like OK I guess what I'm spending the next 10 minutes on. I go to the orb and I see this button open and it says to select amount so I select all and it actually worked. Not only did it open because you can select a certain amount. Thank you Scopely, even if it is the only right thing you do this year.

5

1

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r/MarvelStrikeForce

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The subreddit for MARVEL Strike Force, a game for iOS/Android that is published by Scopely. Feel free to browse our...

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Public

116K Members

35 Online

Top 2% Rank by size

r/MarvelStrikeForce • 8 mo. ago

Open all orbs ever coming back?

Aldo_D_Apache • 4mo ago •

Top 1% Commenter

Credit where credit is due, they knocked this out of the park.

I'm usually first in line with my torch & pitch fork when they have their usual fuck ups, but this is just well done

12

Reply

KudosOfTheFroond OP • 4mo ago •

Top 1% Commenter

Yeah this is one of the first times that my jaw hit the floor, the speed with which it opens the orbs is mind-blowing. I finally got to

r/MarvelStrikeForce • 4 mo. ago

GodTurkey

Open All Orbs Return

Discussion

So I gotta say, Scopely, this is a definite improvement. Whoever worked on this did a good job, honestly. I know, super weird post giving the devs some credit but honestly I like it.

65

6

Share

+

Add a comment

Sort by: Best

Search Comments

Morscerta9116 • 4mo ago •

And I weirdly love that you can choose how many you'd like to open

18

Reply

the-real-jaxom • 4mo ago •

Same! It's extremely important for me when I'm opening the blue iso orbs that I can specify by iso trait. Because I never want to open 2000 Protector only Blue iso orbs but I probably wannah do like 125 so I know I can blue 4 or 5 whoever I'm working on.

1

Reply

r/MarvelStrikeForce

Public

116K Members

53 Online

r/MarvelStrikeForce • 10 days ago

Take a break Scopely and reg

136 upvotes · 16 comments

r/MarvelStrikeForce

1 mo. ago

Stop the Overlapping

175 upvotes · 24 comments

r/MarvelStrikeForce

7 days ago

My Thoughts on the State of

155 upvotes · 50 comments

r/MarvelStrikeForce

3 days ago

Please update the challenges

6



EXPERIENCE DESIGN ON MARVEL STRIKE FORCE

I joined Scopely as Director of XD (Experience Design) for MARVEL Strike Force on March 25, 2024 – the week of their 6th anniversary.

I led a team of 3 full time UX designers (1 manager), 4 full time UI artists (1 manager), 2 vendor UX designers, and 2 vendor UI designers.

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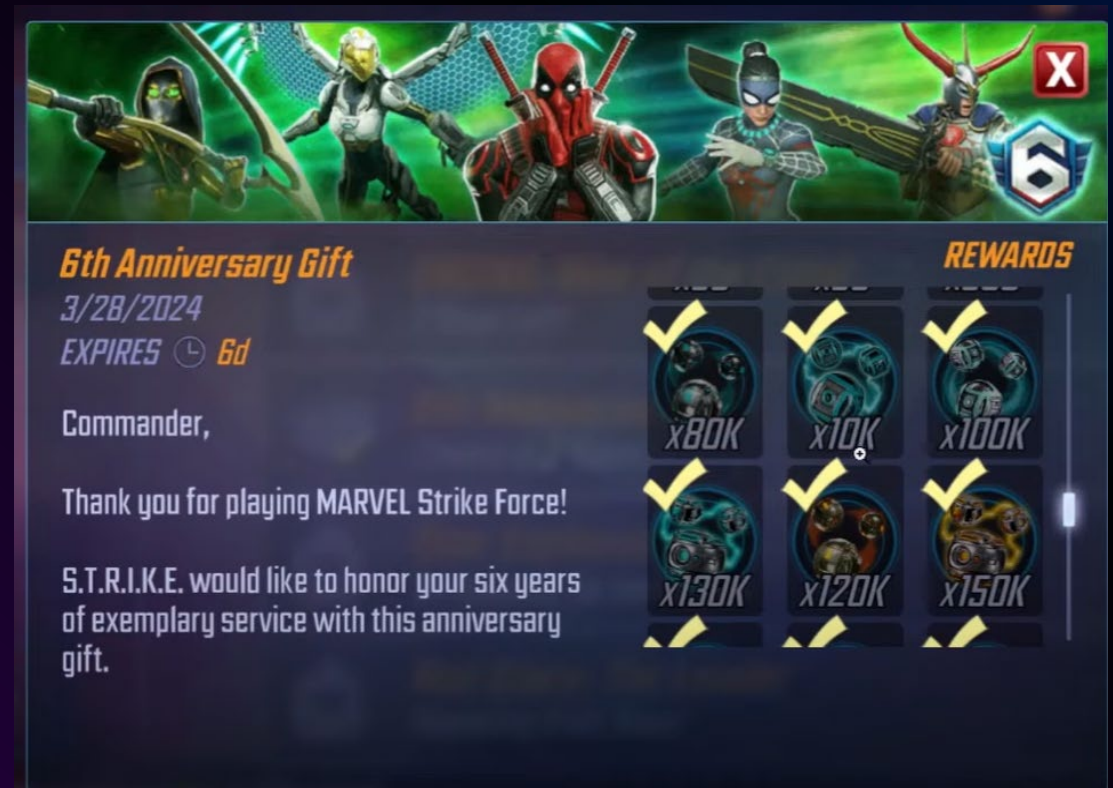
MARVEL Strike Force Software © 2024 SCOPELY, INC.

Opinions my own and I do not speak on behalf of MARVEL or Scopely, Inc.

THE ORB OVERLOAD INCIDENT

On March 28, 2024, the much-promoted 6th Anniversary Gift was sent to all players. There were several issues with the configuration of this bundle:

- In an attempt to be generous, the number of orb shards far exceeded the limits the system was designed to handle.
- The bundle actually only included 50% of the intended gift.
- The bundle dropped at the standard time, 2PM PT, when server traffic was at its highest



PLAYER EXPERIENCE CONTEXT

The hundreds of thousands of shards per player added up to millions of orbs, each generating an individual server call.

Players faced with a large number of orbs to open had three options:

- Open 1 Orb
- Open 10 Orbs
- Open All Orbs

Open All was by far the default for our inflated orb economy, but orb open times were already high due to high volume.



THE BEST WORST CASE
SCENARIO CAME TO
PASS.

SERVERS FAILED,
AND THE "OPEN
ALL" FEATURE
WAS DISABLED...
FOR MONTHS.

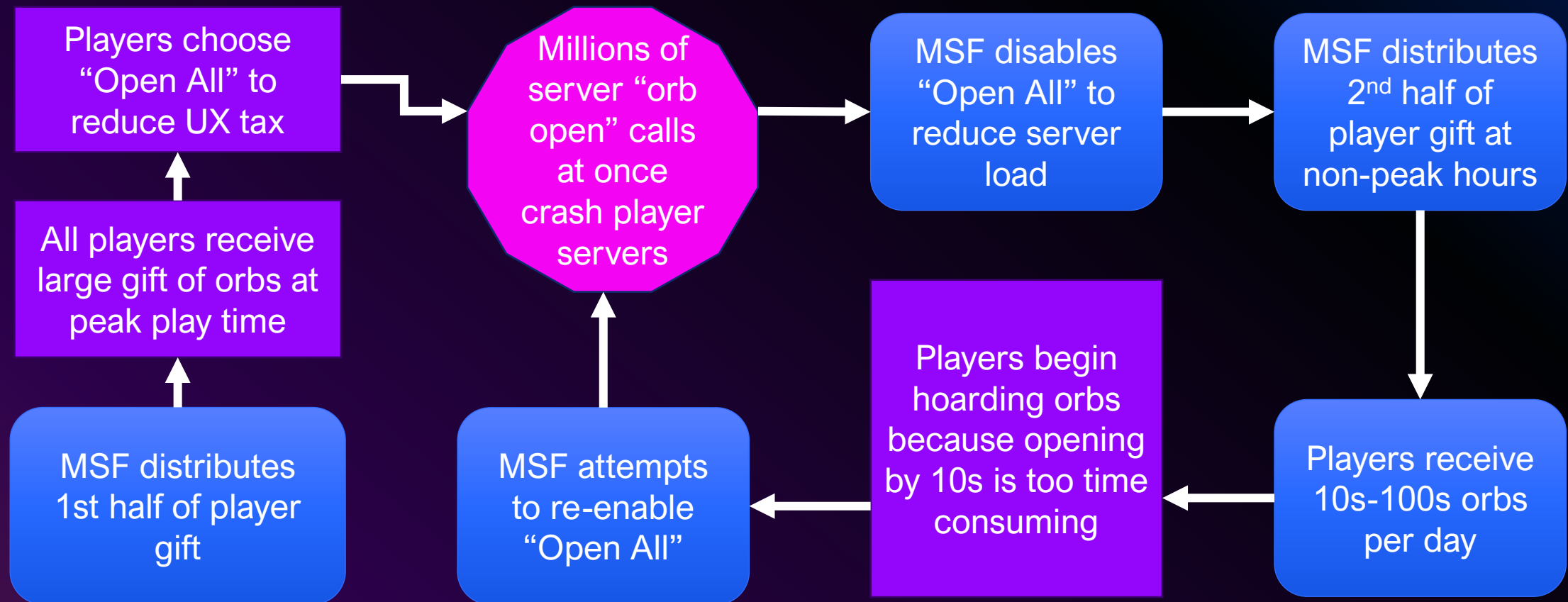


STABILITY ISSUES AND THE ANNIVERSARY GIFT

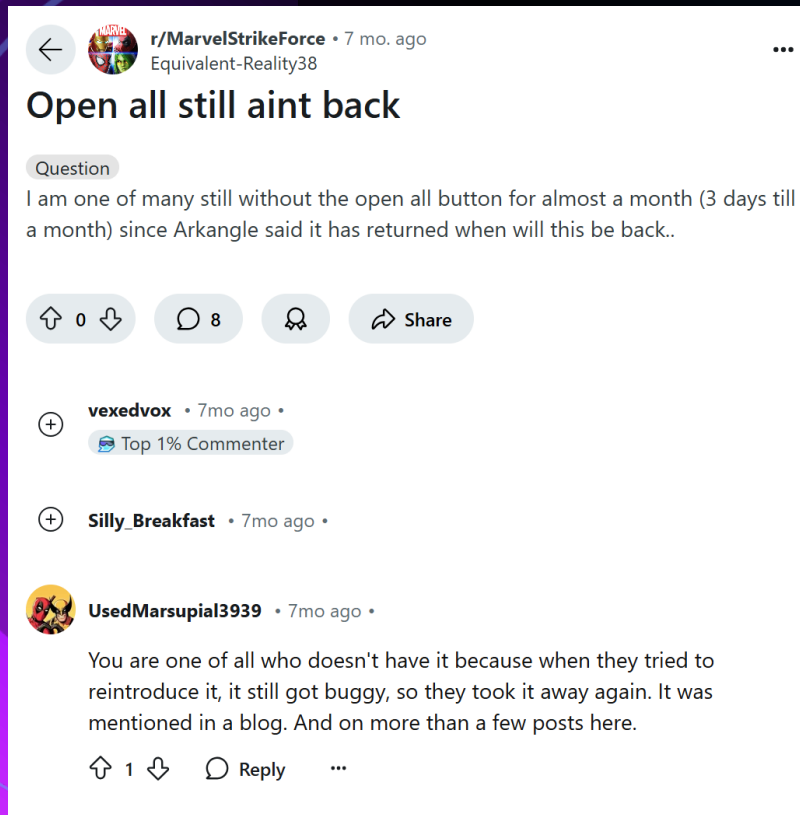
MARCH 29, 2024

Today, March 28th, at 2:00 (PDT), part of the Anniversary gift went to players. There were a high number of orbs in the gift, and players excitedly went in to claim their gifts and open them. Unfortunately, this led to stability issues since so many orbs were being opened simultaneously.

THE ORB HOARDING CYCLE



THE TECHNICAL SOLUTION



Batch opening as originally implemented didn't optimize its server impact, so opening 100 orbs at once was 100 calls to the server. There was a way to change this so that a batch was a single call with parameters.

Engineers had a graceful solution, but doing it right without causing more pain was going to take months.

On May 5 2024, another public attempt to turn Open All back on without the lengthy permanent fix failed.

○ ROOT CAUSE AS INSPIRATION

The UX team looked for ways to minimize short-term suffering, or lower cost solutions.

I did an experience analysis and **realized that we could cut 50% of the time spent opening in batches of 10 with a simple “Open 10 more” button** added to the collection screen that bypassed a return to the lobby and repeated animation.

My UX Design Lead Chris Weeks did a parallel data analysis and found:

- Pro players received hundreds of orbs a day, so this was not a one-time problem ○
- There might be benefits from delayed opening or off-cycle opening ●

WE BROUGHT OUR PROPOSED UX SOLUTIONS TO LEADERSHIP AND ENGINEERING.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Players are hoarding Orbs because it takes too long to open them without Open All.
- The longer they hoard, the less likely we can ever turn the feature back on without relief.
- We need to make it easier for players to open more orbs BEFORE Open All is turned back on to reduce total volume.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

- Add an Open button to the Confirm step to allow repetition of the previous open choice (contextual, either 1 or 10).
- If necessary, build in a slight delay to compensate for the loss of the animation-forced backoff
- This will cut the number of steps to open orbs in HALF AND reduce the time spent animating in and out of the popup, resulting in a much greater net reduction of time spent.



WIREFRAME

Display the remaining orb count. Optional: add support for sharded orb opens.

EXAMPLE: OPENING 63 ORBS MANUALLY WITHOUT OPEN ALL

Current flow: 14 steps



Proposed flow: 7 steps



FRAMING

Chris and I framed our proposals as:

- Potential **low-cost short-term mitigations** for existing player pain pre-fix
- Potential **extensions / improvements** to the planned Open All Orbs backend upgrade

With the extra runway from the backend work, we had an opportunity.

KEY INSIGHT DURING EXPLORATION

Partial opening in batches was still critical for our multi-use currencies like Blitz Credits and Gear Credits. Players had amassed millions of credits and were very unlikely to spend them all in a single transaction.

Improvements to an Open “some” experience would still be valuable.

CROSS-DISCIPLINE ALIGNMENT

In a 30 minute (!) meeting across disciplines, we ruled out some of the ideas, like delayed open, as they did not solve the root problems:

- Fast opening at scale with low server load
- Opening large batches of arbitrary size without high player or server impact

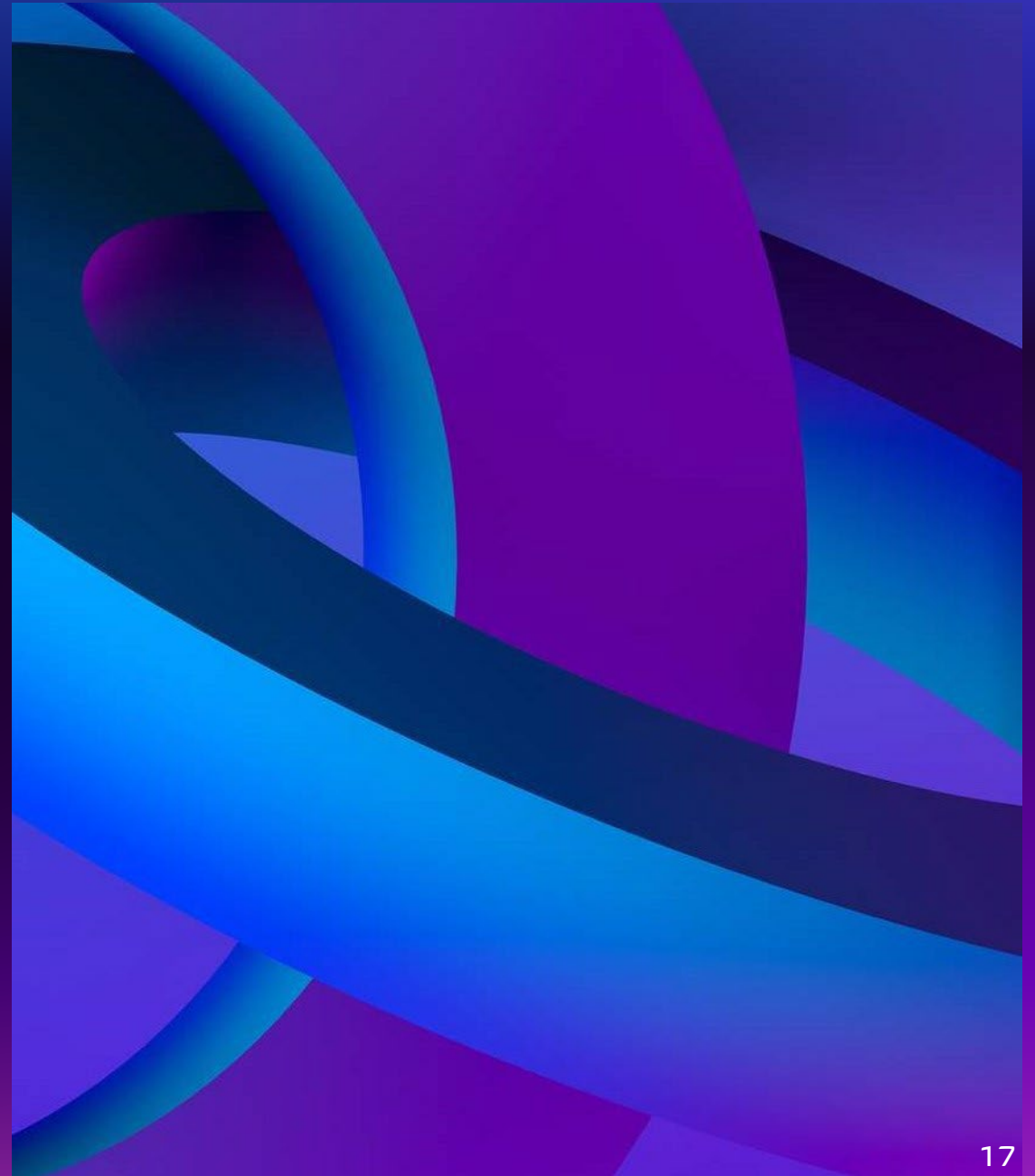
Both sides agreed players wouldn't have enough agency without an option to open less than all, but in batches.

We brainstormed in the meeting and came up with something even better than the first open more proposal:

A logarithmic slider that allowed players to select a quantity up to all regardless of scope.

The additional UX feature was approved, and our design lead Chris Weeks and UI artist Rodrigo led a **four week** effort to design and implement the agreed upon proposal:

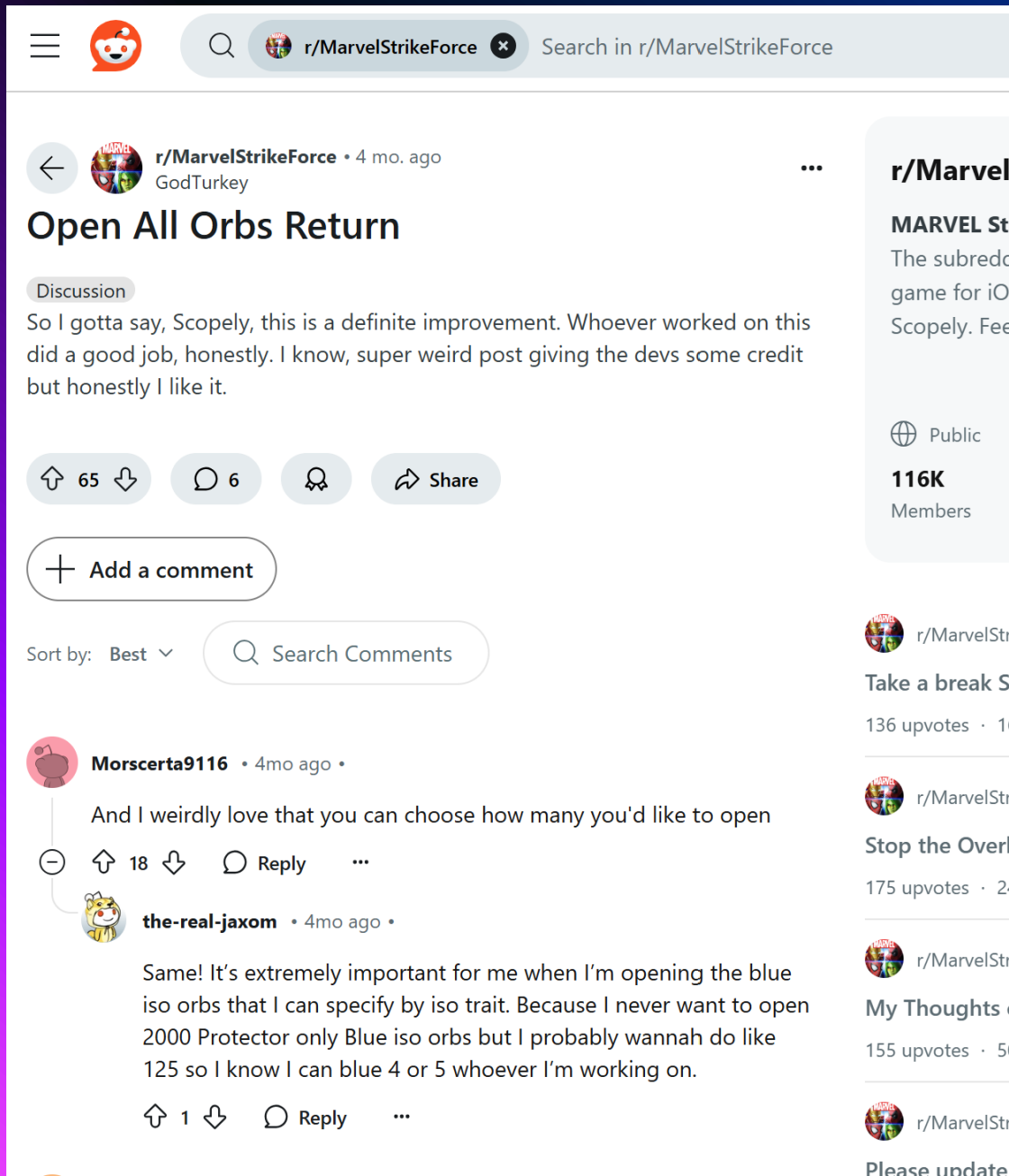
OPEN MORE: LOGARITHMIC SLIDER UX



OPEN MORE ORBS: FULL CONTROL AT SCALE

- For $1 < N < 10$, we have a dynamic one-shot Open N button.
- For $N > 10$, instead of “Open 10” and “Open All”, we have a single conditional “Open More” button.
- Based on the size of the orb hoard, multiple logarithmic snap points are placed on the slider: 10, 100, 1000, 10,000, etc.





WHAT WINNING LOOKS LIKE

When Reddit is *literally* describing the value you proposed to your team in praise of your release, you know you've done something right.

- *"I weirdly love that you can choose how many you'd like to open."*
- *"Same! It's extremely important for me when I'm opening the blue ISO orbs that I can specify by ISO trait."*

SCENARIO 2:

PLAYER SENTIMENT

SUMMONER NAME MIGRATION

LEAGUE OF LEGENDS

RIOT GAMES

SUMMONER NAME MIGRATION

In 2020, Riot deployed the Riot ID system to support its suite of new games like VALORANT and Legends of Runeterra.

League of Legends and Teamfight Tactics players already had names that didn't conform to the new standards. These "summoner names" were maintained alongside their Riot IDs.

However, Summoner IDs became a growing problem for global releases.

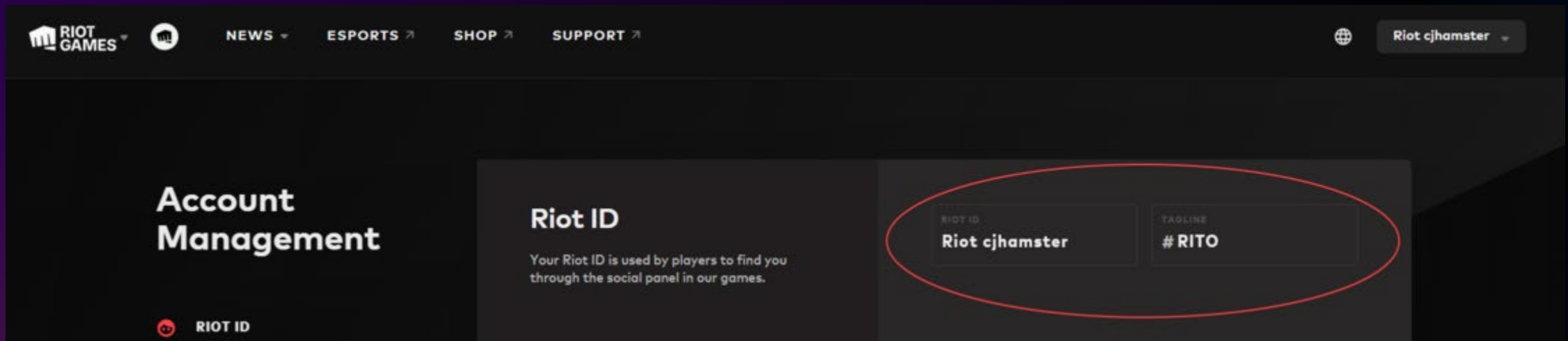
GOALS

- Improve login and onboarding
- Reduce development costs
- Provide consistency across games
- Reduce confusion for new players
- Unlock new opportunities

BEHIND RIOT IDS

Riot ID is a system for uniquely identifying players while allowing some flexibility on friendly screen names.

Inspired by Discord's original naming system, it pairs a gamer name with a "Tagline". Each pair of name and tagline is unique.



THE MIGRATION

Reserved Taglines

For the migration, a special regional tagline was created to reserve legacy gamertags for any players migrating from the old system, like:

Trynadmere #NA1

These were protected taglines that could not be used by players otherwise, so they ensured authenticity of “original” players on those shards. This ensured no players were forced to rename.

Name Changes

Because there were name changes, there was also an expanded name changing system. League of Legends charged Blue Essence for name changes, so that system was expanded with one free name change at launch and one free credit a year.

THE REACTION... WAS STRONG



Gaming

Entertainment

TV & Movies

Esports

More

Call of Duty

Pokemon

Overwatch

Baldur's Gate

Apex Legends

Valorant

ESPORTS > LEAGUE OF LEGENDS

League fans furious at decision to remove Summoner IDs

Declan McLaughlin | Published: Oct 16, 2023, 11:12



Myra Davis
@myra__davis · Follow

The uniqueness of the league igns is something i think is good in the fact that you feel a connection to your name. i waited 2+ years for the ign Myra to become available. i feel a deep connection to it obviously. if it was just some bullshit everyone can have it means nothing

11:04 AM · Oct 16, 2023



1



Reply



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Read 1 reply



Bess
@BessWisty · Follow

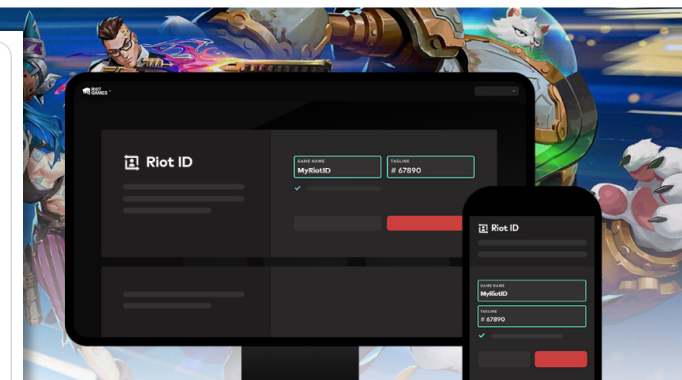
Losing unique summoner names so anyone can impersonate others because the # won't be enough sometimes to notice right away and if you want to change you can't use Blue Essence anymore and will have to pay 10\$ to change or use the free one THAT HAS 1 YEAR COOLDOWN. OMFG WHY?



Riot Games @riotgames

On Nov.20th we're phasing out Summoner Names and shifting exclusively to Riot IDs. We're committed to making this transition smooth and keeping you connected to your gaming identity.

Here's how it will work: riot.com/48V6HLq



8 AM · Oct 16, 2023

567



Reply



Copy link



○ PROBLEM: SELF-EXPRESSION

Problem #1:

Missed Identity

Summoner names are an expression of identity. However, despite some advice to the contrary, the official announcements failed to center the impact to players' identities.

No mention was made of the special reserved shard taglines, or honoring players who had well-known identities.

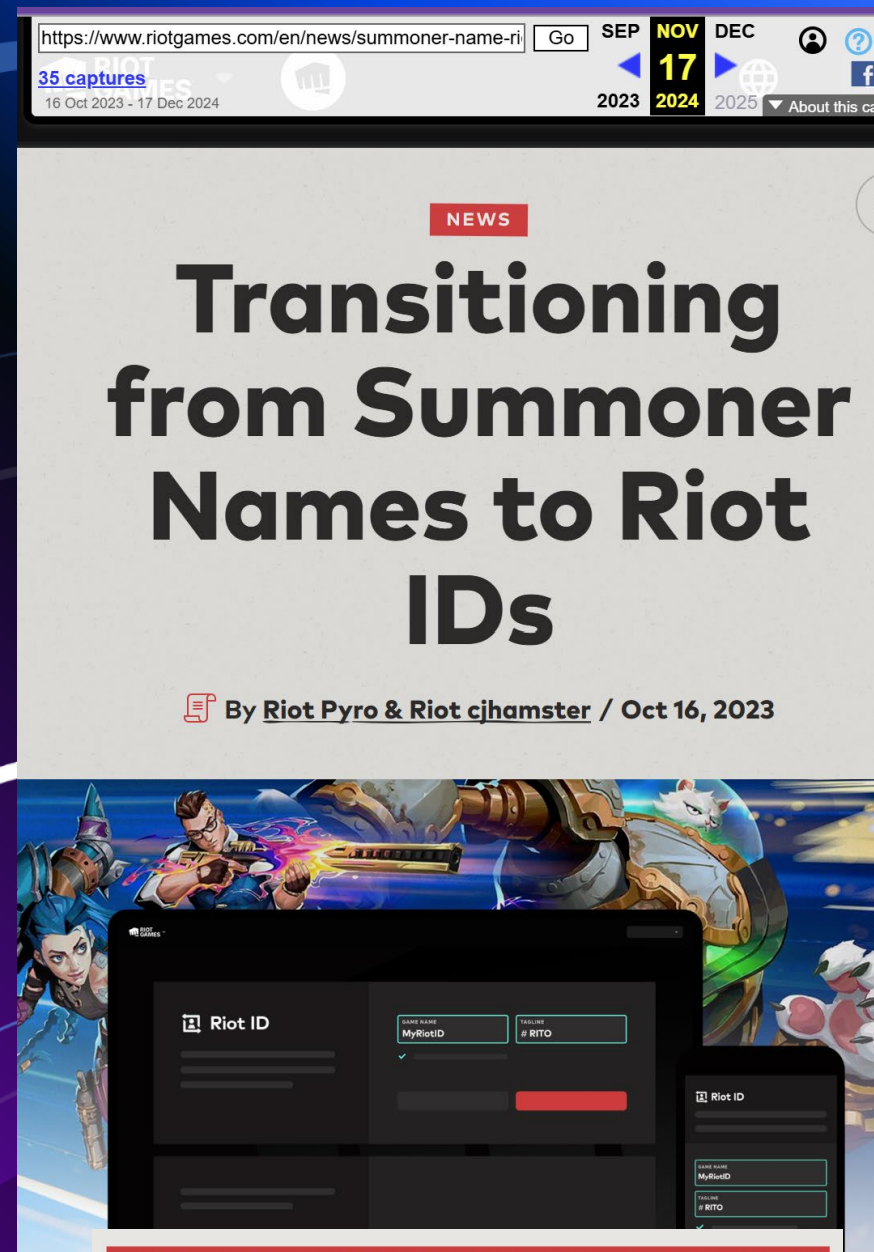
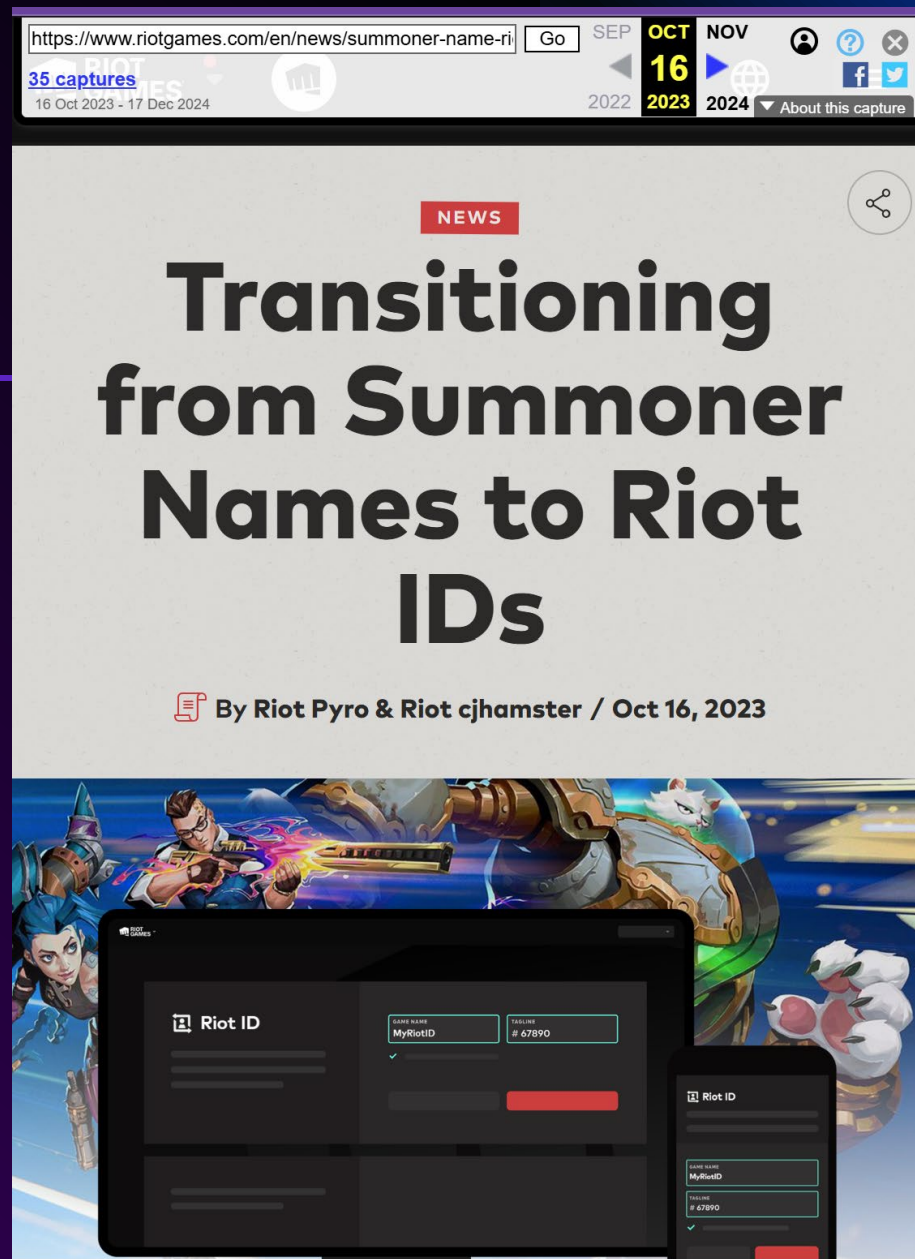
Self-expression is an important emergent motivator of play.

According to Fandom's Inside Gaming 2024 study, 46% of a survey of 5,000 gamers indicated **“creation, imagination, and self-expression”** were a key motivator of play for them – 10% increase over 2023.

CODE SWITCH

Note the depiction of the Riot ID in marketing changed from numbers to a word after the release. This was based on feedback from UX about positioning the feature in terms of expression of identity.

Kudos to Riot for keeping these historical pages up at all!



*Note at 4:30pm Pacific on October 16, we changed the images in the article above to better show what this would look like in action

PROBLEM: ECONOMY

Problem #2:

Endogenous Value

Players reacted negatively to paid name changes because other games, like VALORANT, had not been charging for Riot ID changes. It was seen as a regression to the most devoted players.

Endogenous value is the value your game creates for internal concepts.

If you establish an item or interaction as free and then charge for it later, you're creating cognitive dissonance as you inherently signaled that interaction was not valuable enough for monetization.



◦ PROBLEM: COMMUNICATION

Problem #3:

The Missing Why

Players reacted negatively because the original article didn't share any "why" behind a new feature that introduced expanded monetization while restricting self-expression and devaluing previously unique identities.

Players are inherently curious – that's what makes them play.

Making opaque changes to core features without context will often frustrate players more than in traditional software development.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

- UX advised caution when messaging the gamertag changes because changes to identity are a source of high player emotion (as cited in my book Design Beyond Devices)
- However, changes to team leadership meant this message was lost.
- In retrospect, we could have pushed harder to see whether the launch plans lined up with our recommendations. Even at otherwise established companies, these things can happen.

THE RESPONSE: LATE IS BETTER THAN NEVER

How we've changed plans

After reviewing feedback from players around the world and a lot of internal discussion, we've settled on a few adjustments:

- **Cost for Riot ID Changes:** We want there to be something that makes you think twice about changing your name. Historically, for Summoner Names, Blue Essence or RP did this. For Riot IDs, it was time. Under our new plan, we think we found the right balance with time alone. If it turns out this approach isn't hitting the right goals, we're keeping the door open to modifications in the future, including adding paid or earned options for faster Rioter ID changes.
- **Frequency of Name Changes:** You should have a connection to your name, but we never want you to feel stuck with a name you don't like. 365 days is a long wait and based on last year's data, three months should be a good sweet spot. Going forward, you'll have the opportunity to change your Riot ID for free once every 90 days, starting with this update.
- **Name Uniqueness:** We heard concerns about players with the same name in the same game. Based on data from games where we already use Riot ID, it's a rare scenario, but just in case, we've updated the game scoreboards to always display the hashtag when multiple players with the same name are in the same game. In our first announcement, we also should have been clearer that you'll be able to see the hashtag portion of a name at any time by hovering that player on the scoreboard and that the hashtag is customizable, not randomized like how some other games assign names.
- **Impersonation Concerns:** Some content creators and professional players told us that they're concerned about impersonation under the Riot ID system. We think we have a good solution in the works and we'll share more about that when details are final.

When we saw the backlash, I collaborated with my team members including Melody Seng, Matt Wease, and Jay Kapur who tirelessly worked to make sure that our subsequent actions:

- Honored player expressions of identity
- Provided a clear justification for the change outside of monetization
- Replaced the monetization element from the launch with quicker free changes and framing around intentional friction to avoid abuse

WHAT CAN WE ABSTRACT FROM THESE
LEARNING EXPERIENCES?

IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO
ALONE: TAKE THESE TIPS.

TAKEAWAYS: LIVE INCIDENTS

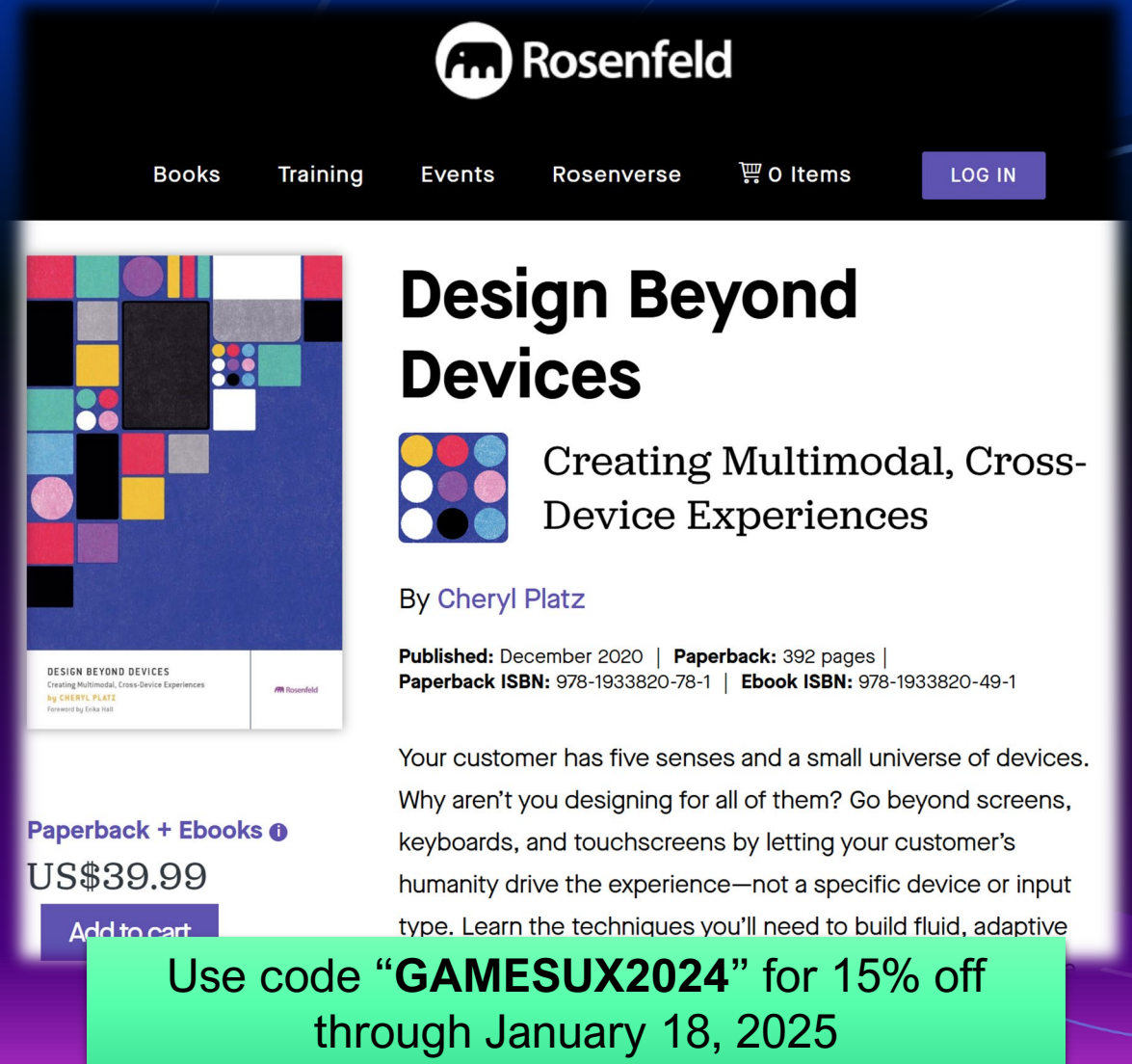
- **Chaos is an opportunity – don't wait for an invitation.**
 - If you have to fix a system, figure out what UX improvements can be made while in there.
- **Communicate value using clear metrics.**
 - The original proposal was a 50% savings in time for players.
 - We identified a previously unidentified scenario – multi-use currencies.
 - We also brought data about daily orb usage for highly engaged players.
- **Lead with curiosity and collaboration.**
 - We didn't ship our original idea.
 - Engineers gave us the space to ship something even better.

TAKEAWAYS: PLAYER SENTIMENT

- **Don't shy away when things go wrong.**
 - An emotional player response means they still care enough to give you feedback. Use the reaction to drive positive change.
- **Help peers understand the cognitive psychology of players.**
 - As designers, you know things about motivation, perception, and self-expression that others don't. How can you ensure that knowledge is being put to best use?
- **Players are curious, and they are very attuned to value.**
 - Always lead with the why if possible.
 - Be very cautious when making changes that change the intrinsic value of core actions or items in your economy.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

My first book “**Design Beyond Devices: Creating Multimodal, Cross Device Experiences**” includes insights that can help you predict issues like the Riot ID incident using the CROW framework and Opti-Pessimism, plus chapters on AR/VR, multimodal input and output, notifications, design systems, and more. Available at **RosenfeldMedia.com** or your favorite online bookseller.



The screenshot shows the Rosenfeld website with a dark header. The navigation bar includes links for Books, Training, Events, Rosenverse, a shopping cart icon with '0 Items', and a 'LOG IN' button. The main content area features the book 'Design Beyond Devices' by Cheryl Platz. The book cover is displayed on the left, showing a colorful geometric pattern. To the right of the cover, the title 'Design Beyond Devices' is prominently displayed, followed by the subtitle 'Creating Multimodal, Cross-Device Experiences'. Below the subtitle, the author's name 'By Cheryl Platz' is listed. Further down, publication details are provided: 'Published: December 2020 | Paperback: 392 pages | Paperback ISBN: 978-1933820-78-1 | Ebook ISBN: 978-1933820-49-1'. A description of the book follows, starting with 'Your customer has five senses and a small universe of devices. Why aren't you designing for all of them? Go beyond screens, keyboards, and touchscreens by letting your customer's humanity drive the experience—not a specific device or input type. Learn the techniques you'll need to build fluid, adaptive...'. At the bottom left of the book listing, the price 'US\$39.99' is shown next to a 'Paperback + Ebooks' icon, and an 'Add to cart' button is visible. A large green banner at the bottom of the screenshot contains the promotional code 'Use code "GAMESUX2024" for 15% off through January 18, 2025'.

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Design Beyond Devices

Creating Multimodal, Cross-Device Experiences

By Cheryl Platz

Published: December 2020 | Paperback: 392 pages |
Paperback ISBN: 978-1933820-78-1 | Ebook ISBN: 978-1933820-49-1


Your customer has five senses and a small universe of devices. Why aren't you designing for all of them? Go beyond screens, keyboards, and touchscreens by letting your customer's humanity drive the experience—not a specific device or input type. Learn the techniques you'll need to build fluid, adaptive

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WANT TO LEARN MORE?

My second book “**Enduring Play: Creating Video Games that Thrive**” will release with Rosenfeld Media in 2025, and covers topics like motivators of play, self-expression, and cross-disciplinary alignment. Follow me on LinkedIn for updates.



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Enduring Play

Creating Video Games that Thrive

By [Cheryl Platz](#)

To be published: 2025

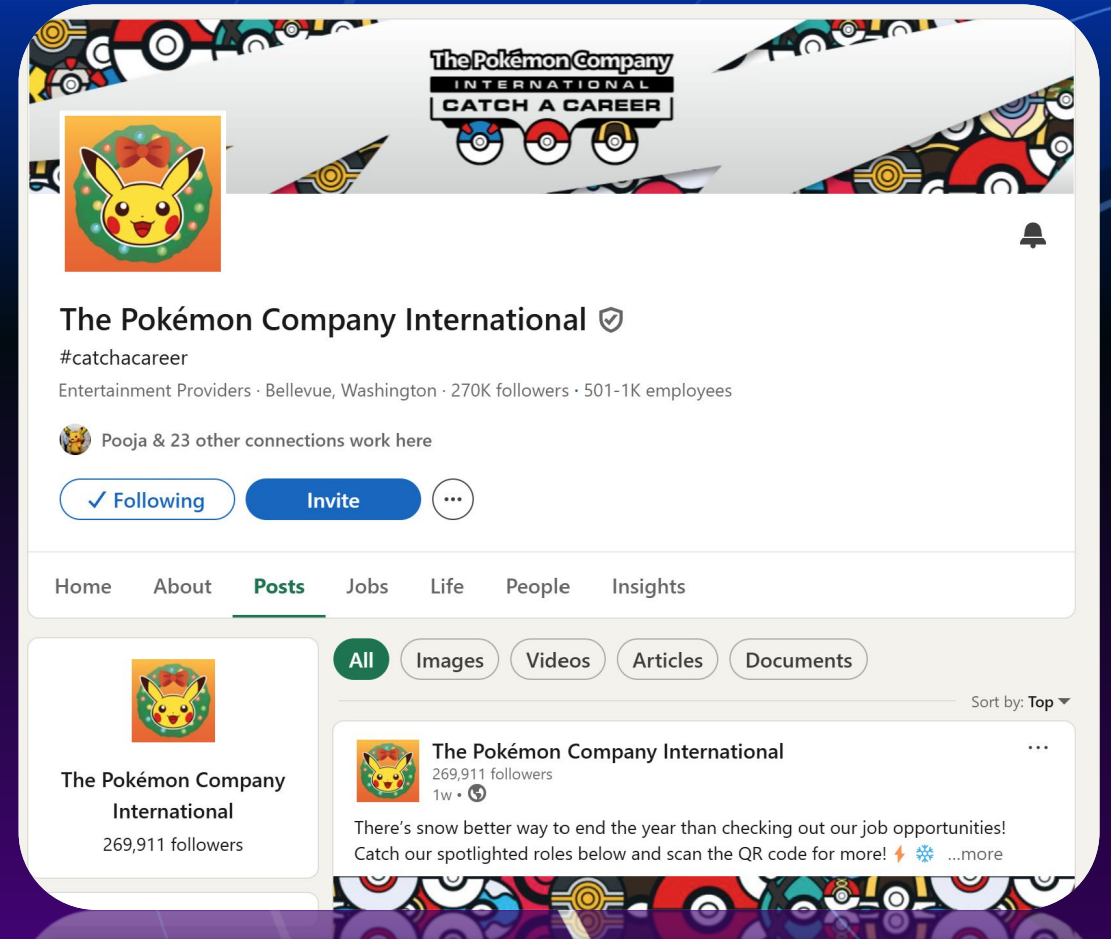
The video game industry has grown to become a darling of the entertainment industry, with \$184 billion of revenue in 2023. But that expansion has increased competition exponentially, and today's game developers face a tougher struggle than ever before to differentiate their titles before a market full of algorithmic recommendations swallows them whole. Enduring Play invites both industry veterans and aspiring game developers and designers to level up their game development craft to this newest normal. Explore the modern game development process



About Cheryl Platz 

LOOKING FOR WORK?

Follow **The Pokémon Company International** for future job openings at the Game Studio working on the Pokémon TCG Live game in 2025. (This talk is not sponsored or endorsed by TPCi.)



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/pokemon/>

GAME ON!

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Special thanks to the entire 2024 MARVEL Strike Force development team, especially the engineering team who welcomed our XD ideas with their own.

Special thanks to the 2023 Riot Player Platform and League identity teams (the “LoPP” working groups) who worked so hard on the Summoner Name transition.



Cheryl Platz

Design Leader, Educator, Author
| Creative Director, Game Studi...

