MGA FUNDRAISING

Make Gaming About Fundraising

Bridging the gap between nonprofits and video game communities

Highlights

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Organizations are always looking to find ways of acquiring new sources of potential donors, but struggle to connect with younger audiences.

Vibrant, engaged video game communities are eager to raise funds for causes they believe in, but find that many organizations lack the infrastructure to support their activities.

The gap in knowledge and expertise at organizations causes missed opportunities to connect with the audience they have been searching for.

Here's how to bridge the gap:

- The right combination of fundraising and content creation
- Understand the scale of opportunity
- Set realistic expectations

Key Takeaways:

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- How to create an initial livestream fundraising strategy
- Utilize Discord as your organization's community hub
- What you need in a streaming toolkit

INTRODUCTION

Video game communities have been raising money for years. Most prominently, Games Done Quick, whose annual events have been raising around $3M a year for Prevent Cancer Foundation and Doctors Without Borders, has been active in fundraising for over a decade.

Some organizations like the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals, St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, and Direct Relief have also found great success as early adopters in leveraging video game audiences for their fundraising programs.

In recent years, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic set in, organizations tend to fall into the following categories in terms of fundraising in the video game space:

- Early Adopters: The aforementioned early adopters who continue to expand on their success.
- Still Discovering: organizations that have started to explore the video game fundraising space and have either had some success or are struggling to make headway.
- Not Ready: Those who have not yet explored working with video game communities, due to either lack of knowledge or lack of desire to invest in the exploration.

If your organization falls into the latter two categories, this will likely resonate with you more.

THE RIGHT COMBINATION OF FUNDRAISING AND CONTENT CREATION

The first step to building a bridge is knowledge. Fundraising with video game communities is often compared to classic peer-to-peer fundraising with a nuanced twist that comes with gaming culture.

Even with a background in peer-to-peer fundraising, organizations start to falter when they fail to apply basic tenets of the video game communities and the content creators they follow. So here are some tips:

- Focus on stewarding the content creator instead of trying to cultivate their donors
  - More often than not, the donor chose to give because of the person they're watching, not necessarily because of the organization.
  - The better your relationship with the content creator, the better their community will think of you.
- Respect online handles
  - The creators and their audiences often address themselves by their handles, not their real names.
  - Yet organizations try to obtain the real names under the misguided notion that this is the best way to address them in follow up marketing.
    - Their handles are their brand. If you cannot respect that, they will not respect you. Yes, they want to be addressed as "RedMenace42," not John Smith.
- Understand the language
  - Most gaming communities will not require the specific knowledge of games, genres and/or gameplay styles. However, it will go a long way in establishing a good rapport with those communities.
  - Follow @ExtraLife4Kids on Twitter for a good example.

Knowledge of fundraising requires being familiar with the potential market and how that compares with "traditional" fundraising demographics.

Scale of Opportunity

How big of an opportunity are we talking about here? The following should help with getting buy-in from colleagues. In January 2018, *Business Insider* reported that Twitch averaged 962K daily concurrent viewers. This put Twitch in direct competition with traditional media channels:
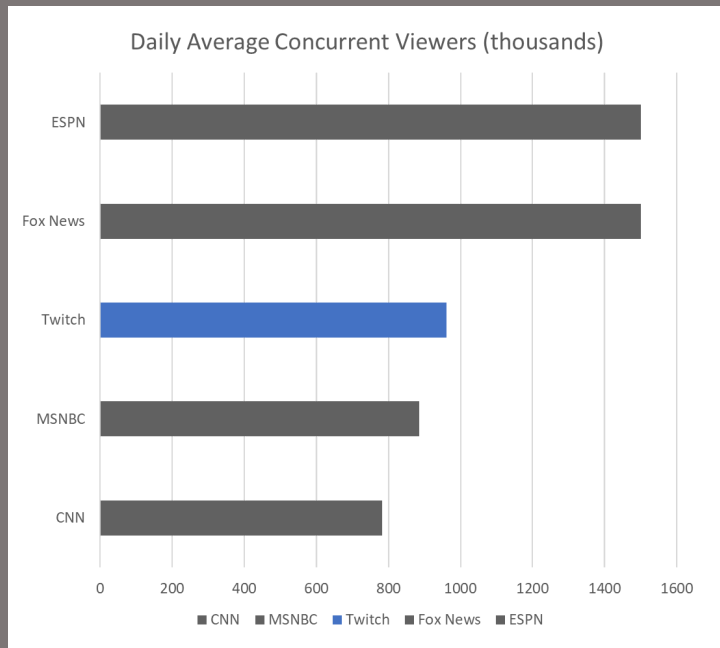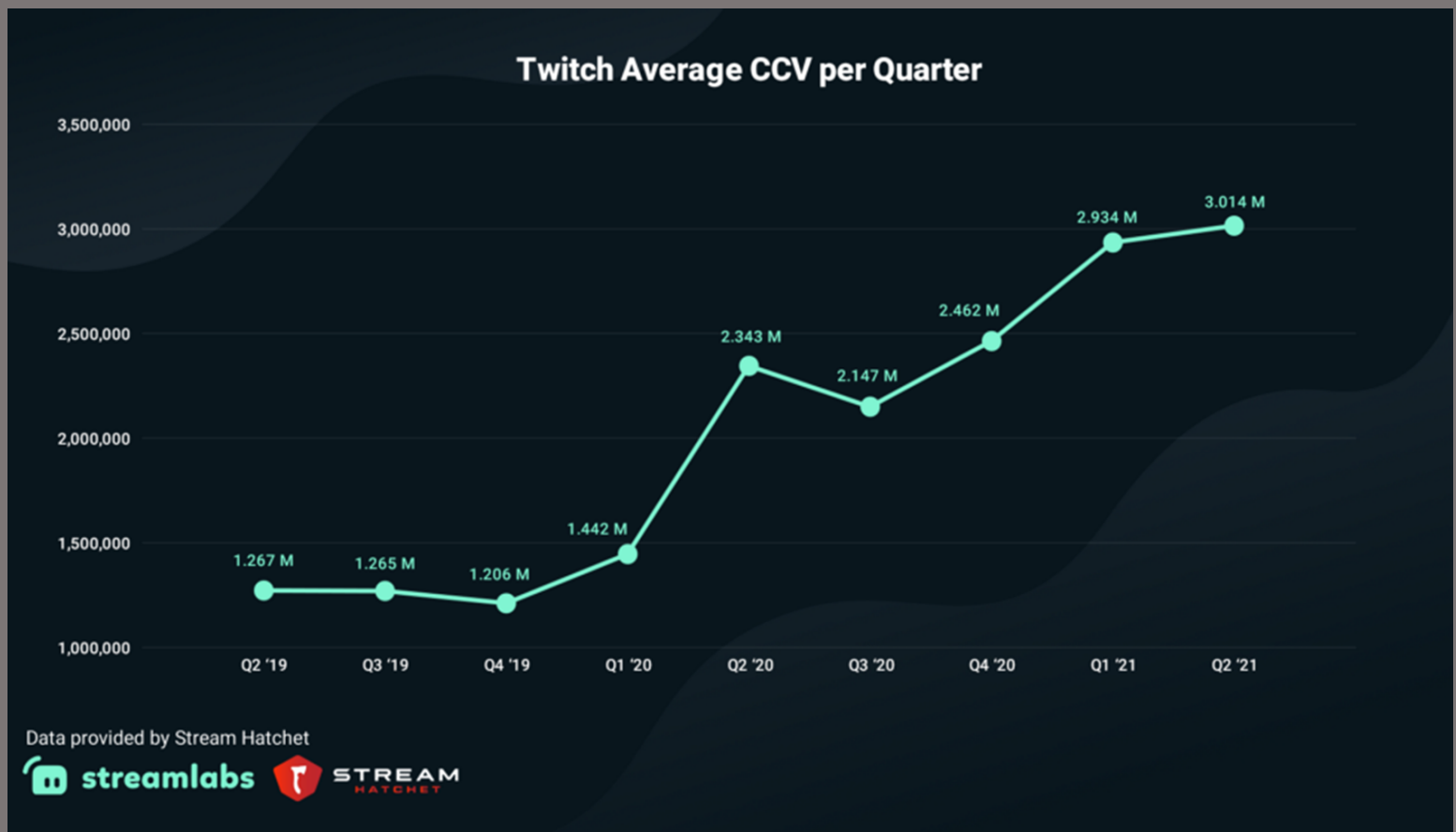
Since then, Twitch viewership has skyrocketed, with average concurrent viewership at around 3 million as of Q2 2021. YouTube and Facebook Gaming represented almost 600k and 540k respectively.

With this many eyes on livestream platforms, it is easy to see the golden opportunity here.

Moreover, the Twitch audience skews young, as expected, with 41% aged 16-24 and 32% aged 25-34. However, there are about 24% between 35-54 according to *Global Web Index*.

Contrast this with the average age of the "traditional" donor at 65 years, according to *Blackbaud*.

With this knowledge, we can finally start to formulate the basics of a strategy around this audience.

Daily Average Concurrent Viewers (thousands)

Channel	Viewers
ESPN	~1500
Fox News	~1500
Twitch	~962
MSNBC	~880
CNN	~780

Legend: ■ CNN ■ MSNBC ■ Twitch ■ Fox News ■ ESPN

Twitch Average CCV per Quarter

Quarter	Average CCV
Q2 '19	1.267 M
Q3 '19	1.265 M
Q4 '19	1.206 M
Q1 '20	1.442 M
Q2 '20	2.343 M
Q3 '20	2.147 M
Q4 '20	2.462 M
Q1 '21	2.934 M
Q2 '21	3.014 M

Data provided by Stream Hatchet

streamlabs STREAM HATCHET

CREATE A LIVESTREAM FUNDRAISING STRATEGY

For many organizations, this is still a new frontier, but thankfully, the initial steps are relatively easy. Moreover, many tools and resources are free.

SET REALISTIC GOALS & EXPECTATIONS

Start small, but plan to scale.

According to *Tiltify,* one of the largest fundraising platforms that integrates with Twitch and YouTube, the average Tiltify campaign in 2021 looked like this:

- $2,657 (if using all of Tiltify's features)
- $41.87 average donation
- 29 unique donors

Moreover, fundraisers tend to create at least two campaigns a year and returning fundraisers tend to raise more with each successive campaign.

Extrapolated from above, it is reasonable to aim for one event per quarter (4 total in a year) and raise $10,000 in the first year.

It may not sound like a lot, but the data collected from your first few events will be worth their weight soon enough. This data will be used to plan future events, set a baseline for projections, and the lessons learned will provide valuable experience for your budding program.

COMMUNITY FIRST

The dollar amounts may be used to satisfy the curiosity of executives as you try to gain buy-in and support for your program. However, the real goal in your first year is to build a community.

To do that, you need a hub for people to congregate, organize, and share with one another.

The most popular tool to do this is Discord. It's free and easy to set up.

Discord is a powerful community tool because it provides a direct line of communication between creators and organizations. It also creates a space for collaborations, tip sharing, and even for potential staff recruitment.
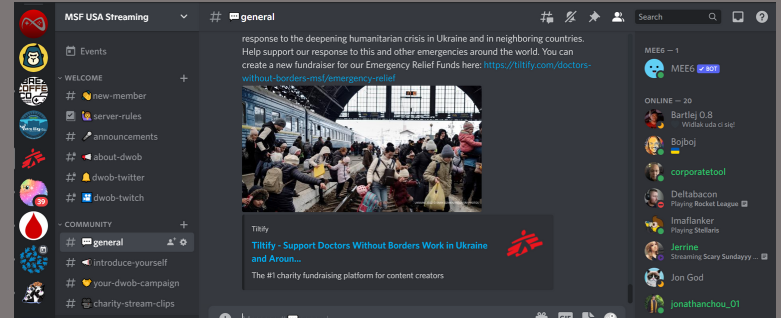
Discord's documentation is fairly straightforward, but we do caution you to properly set up permissions to prevent bad behavior.

For beginners and those without a dedicated community manager, we recommend using a bot such as MEE6 to assist with automated functions like greeting new members.

These members will likely be the content creators who will raise funds for you, so it is important to give them a good experience in your community.

One of the first things you want to share with members is your broadcast toolkit.

THE BROADCAST TOOLKIT

The toolkit is simply your branding, adapted for use by a content creator. The basic toolkit should comprise of the following:

- Overlays - a branded screen that goes over the content creator's usual display
- Alerts - a popup to notify the content creator and their audience when a donation is received
- Scenes - branded page backgrounds commonly used for: stream starting, intermissions, and stream ending
- Talking Points - helps the broadcaster highlight particular programs or initiatives
- Rules - always provide a documented code of conduct
- Logos - in case content creators want to customize their own tools (but must adhere to your brand guidelines)

With this toolkit, you will have the foundation of what is called a DIY Fundraising Program. So called because it relies on people to download the toolkit for their own uses.

This is an inherently passive method of recruitment, so be sure to drive people to your toolkit via social media and if possible, track the downloads so you can monitor what items are being used. This will inform you on what parts of the toolkit are performing well and which ones may need to be updated.
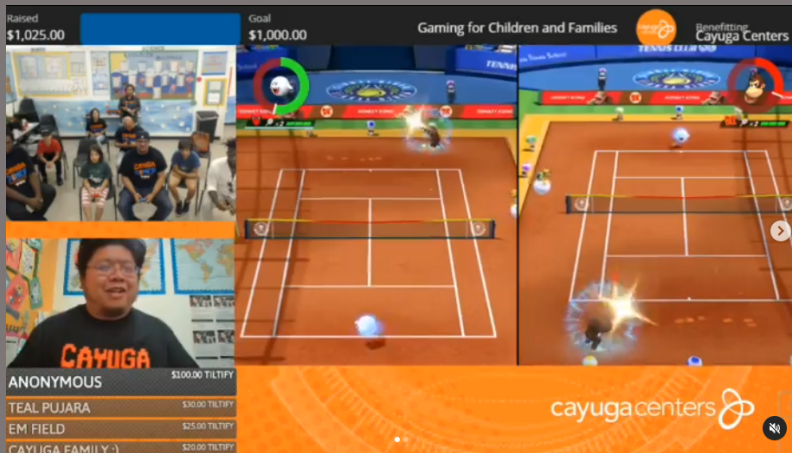
CONCLUSION

Are you ready to start building that bridge? Remember that this is an investment in time that will pay off in the long run. It is an opportunity to tap into a younger, engaged audience that is hungry to raise funds for a cause. That audience becomes your community and you must encourage growth in that community if you want to see a financial return on your investment. The information in this report should hopefully give you some guidance and insight on your organization's journey into the world of video gaming communities.

Sources

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- The State of Digital Fundraising 2021, *Tiltify*, 2021

Marc Almanzor is the owner of MGA Fundraising LLC. Marc has over 15 years experience in nonprofit fundraising with roles in direct response, major gifts, foundation giving, and development operations. He has previously served with Doctors Without Borders, Amnesty International, and Candid. He can also be found on his Twitch channel several times a week.

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