

Staying Ahead of the Game

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Innovation is the fulcrum for Electronic Arts, whether it is business development or marketing. It is what it takes to stay ahead in the gaming business with new platforms, new media and new competitors. Morten nielsen, Nordic Marketing Director at gaming giant Electronic Arts, talks to Jonas Hemmingsen, CEO at MediaCom Nordic, about iPads, co-promotions and thinking outside the box.

Like most other industries, the gaming business has been hit by the financial crisis, prompting software companies such as Electronic Arts (EA) to go back to the kinds of marketing strategies that they know work: Television, Out of Home and various digital

activities. However, Morten Nielsen, Nordic Marketing Director, emphasises, the company is still aiming to stay innovative and is always looking out for new ways of doing things. "We want to stay Top of the Pops," says Nielsen.

Jonas Hemmingsen (JH): How does the need for constant innovation affect your co-operation with your media agency? What do you expect from us?

MN: "The young consumers use their mobile phones, iPhones and iPads all the time. Social media is a very high priority to them, and thereby to us. We're already the biggest supplier of games for iPhones, and in all our 2010-title launches you'll find hype games for Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. This makes it very important to us that our advertising agency and media agency stay ahead of the game and propose new paths to us with due respect to the ROI."

JH: In reality the iPhone works as a gaming device. How do you see the arrival of the iPad? It has a better screen than the iPhone, which already has around 150,000 applications – most of them free. How will this affect your business?

MN: "The iPad is not a top priority for us. This is due to several reasons. One, we see that the market share for PC games in general is going down. And two, the area in growth is social games like Wii. The mobile phones are primarily for the quick fix, when you're on your way to school or university, whereas the computers or Playstations provide an experience of a higher quality."

JH: And if the free applications for iPads spread in the same way as they have with the iPhone...?

MN: "I'm sure we'll see that happen but I don't think it will catch on in the beginning. If you look at the iPhone the graphics are great and the usability is amazing. For the simple games the iPad will obviously be perfect, but if you want to play more complicated games, like Counterstrike for instance, you have to be online and to be able to react within seconds. The iPad simply won't do the job."

JH: Innovation has been a top priority for EA since 2000...

MN: "Yes, we aim to launch two, three innovative titles every year. And we aim to position ourselves as the online leader. When we launch a new title we always include an online plan. It's extremely important to us to hold onto the gamers so they don't think: 'That was it? Now I have to go down and invest another €80 in a new game'. We need to supply free online content, new fields, uniforms and the like to keep them going. The best example was a FIFA gamer in USA who spent \$2,500 because he was so fascinated by all the extra assets."

JH: Do you see any possibilities for involving the advertiser to a higher extent? Obviously in-game advertising has been around for years...

MN: "No doubt about that, in-game advertising has been around for what feels like forever. The best example is FIFA, where you can buy the classic in-game banners. Obviously there are lots of other options and the great thing is that we can track it and report it to the advertiser. In the future we will sell ads in two ways: The classic way and the new way where we introduce it as part of the game, which will ensure higher involvement and we'll be able to track it quite accurately in the targeted groups. We know this method from the movie industry, where they have worked with product placement for years, and we'll see a lot more of it, as games have surpassed movies in many ways."

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