

An Evaluation of Video Game Developing and Publishing Websites: A Proposal on their Effects on Sales and Popularity

Prepared for: Storm Studios

Prepared by: WebTech Consulting

April 30th, 2019



Storm Studios
Web Development Department
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March 13, 2019

Marah Orr
Head Consultant
WebTech Consulting
1542 Kingsley Street,
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Dear Ms. Orr:

Subject: Evaluation of video game websites

In the last 10 years, there has been a strong correlation between a company's ability to increase and maintain a large number of product sales and having an attractive and user-friendly website. Due to the internet revolution, potential customers are able to easily access and purchase our products from a variety of online markets and third-party services. According to studies, companies with enjoyable websites saw an increase of 35% in profits in a 5 year period. We at Storm Studios wish to improve our own company website, subsequently increasing our total number of sales and profits.

StormStudios.com has not been updated since 2010, and our lack of a modern, user-friendly website has resulted in a steady loss in sales, as our customers are buying our products from third-party services instead of directly from Storm Studios. We wish to commission your team to deliver a report on how to improve StormStudios.com with the goal of making it a truly modern website with attractive and user-friendly assets. We wish to see the report submitted no later than May 1st, 2019 and to be presented May 18th, 2019.

We look forward to seeing your report and will gladly provide you with any additional information about the functionality of our website. Feel free to contact me by phone at 700-245-8290.

Yours sincerely,

Tristan Smith

Tristan Smith
Senior Development Consultant

WebTech Consulting

Web Consulting Department
1542 Kingsley Street,
Seattle, WA 80210

March 19, 2019

Tristan Smith
Senior Development Consultant
Storm Studios
4758 Red Lion Pl
Palm Beach, CA 23875

Dear Mr. Smith:

Subject: Video game website evaluation completed

Here is the report of our evaluation of successful video game websites and how to improve StormStudios.com.

We have recommended the following sources as examples of quality and user-friendly website design:

- **Failbettergames.com** for development of a personal aesthetic
- **Rockstargames.com** for user engagement
- **Blizzard.com** for simplicity and user-friendliness

We are very confident that these sites are useful, up to date resources that will be helpful in improving your company's online sales.

We have enjoyed working on this report. We would like to thank our team of researchers; Thomas Orr, Sarah Miller, and Madison Rowzee for assisting us in finding and developing the resources relevant to your company's needs. If you have any questions or comments about the report, we will be happy to meet with you. I can be reached at 434-465-9097.

Yours sincerely,

Marah Orr

Marah Orr
Principal Consultant

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Executive Summary

A decrease in sales and popularity has resulted in Storm Studios needing to improve their online presence and approachability. Their website has not been updated since 2010, and it is not receiving the kind of attention Storm Studios desires.

With the variety of game developing company websites available online, it is necessary to maintain an attractive and user-friendly platform to enhance user enjoyment and draw in new customers. Storm Studios Senior Development Consultant, Tristan Smith, asked WebTech Consulting to review and recommend three game-developing company websites that provide quality examples of form and content.

WebTech Consulting was asked to find websites that exemplify quality design meant to appeal to a broad range of customers, with an easy-to-use navigational system and a distinct company personality. User enjoyment, ease of use, and aesthetic design were all evaluated with the goal of increasing sales and popularity while increasing online presence.

The websites were reviewed and analyzed per these criteria:

- **Aesthetic Design:** modern and/or unique style, color, layout, presentation
- **Ease of Use:** accessibility, search directory, easy/understandable navigation
- **User Enjoyment:** minimal out-linking, navigation, quality of information

A survey was posted on several video game forums and social media outlets online to find the most popular websites. The results of that survey lead us to these three websites on which to base our analysis:

- Failbettergames.com
- Rockstargames.com
- Blizzard.com

The objective of this report is to provide Storm Studios with unique and creative examples of elements to incorporate into their own website. We at WebTech Consulting are confident that our recommendations based on our analysis of these websites will not only enhance the Storm Studios website but also increase their sales and overall popularity.

Introduction

Over the last twenty years, there has been a major increase in the popularity of online gaming. Thus, this leads to the creation of thousands of different gaming sites, each with their own, unique designs. User enjoyment, ease of use, and aesthetic design are issues that have made it difficult for many gamers to purchase their favorite video games online, resulting in a decrease in sales.

This decrease in sales has resulted in Storm Studios searching for a way to make their website more approachable and user-friendly.

WebTech was asked by Storm Studios to analyze and recommend three websites that exhibit the highest of three qualities: Aesthetic Design, Ease of Use, and User Enjoyment. Our analysis would provide Storm Studios with the best information needed to improve their website and their online sales.

PC Online Game Market Value from 2011-2019 (in billion US dollars)

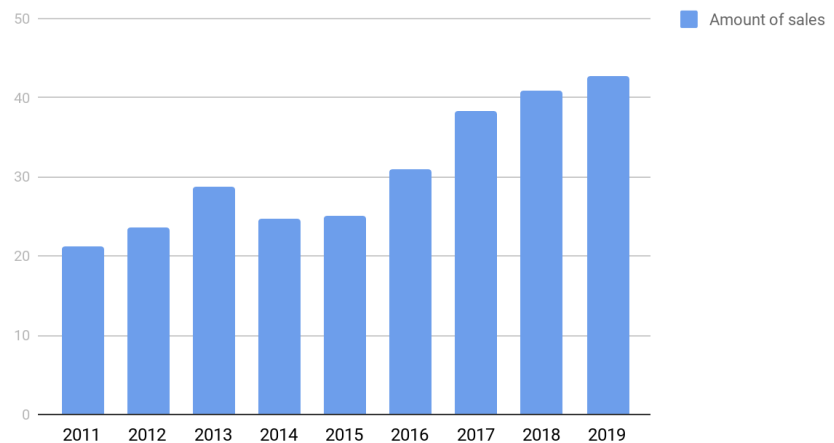


Figure 1: Graph of online gaming value by year

WebTech, based in Washington, has been an online consulting company for fifteen years. We have done research for a large number of websites varying from online sales to creating business profiles.

As the focus of our analysis, we chose Failbettergames.com, Rockstargames.com, and Blizzard.com. Each website was analyzed using the following criteria:

- **Aesthetic Design:** Modern style, unique layout, and a lot of colors/pictures
- **Ease of Use:** Accessibility, search directory, and easy navigation
- **User Enjoyment:** Quality of information, navigation, and minimal out-linking

In addition, a survey about these websites was posted on popular gaming message boards. The answers to the survey confirmed our results.

Analysis of Failbetter Games Website

<https://www.failbettergames.com/>



Figure 2: Failbetter Games Logo

Aesthetic Design

The aesthetic design of Failbetter Games' website has a unique and melancholy approach to color scheme and imagery, which reflects the themes of the horror/adventure style games they create. The page is awash in subdued greens, purples, and browns, with lighter sections of whites resembling open books to express the literary elements used in Failbetter's games.

The text is set as white on black, creating an overall darker atmosphere while providing an easier system to distinguish the text from the backgrounds. There are various background images on the main page which shift between the titles of Failbetter's games and provide images and illustrations related to those games. These backgrounds, however, shift randomly and do not always provide enough time for the reader.

The separate pages on the website follow a similar layout using the rule of thirds - with the top third being dedicated to images and illustrations, the next third being dedicated to information, and the final third being dedicated to recent news and contact information. The text all follows a horizontal format along with the images. While the similarities between the pages can seem uncreative, it is an effective method for assuring quality.

Ease of Use

The Failbetter Games website has a simple, easy to follow navigation system based on drop-down menus located at the top of each page. These menus follow the standard format of titles such as 'Home' and 'About,' with menus also dedicated to each game produced by the company. The drop-down menus each contain clearly labeled subsections, which take the user to the selected page.

The pages themselves are divided into clear sections: title, information, and news and contact information. Each of these sections has clearly labeled 'read more' sections which make subject based navigation easier than using a traditional search bar.

Contact information and 'help' sections are well labeled in the various menus, with specific 'help' sections dedicated to each individual game, and contact information sitting in its own easily accessed page. Failbetter Games also offers a subscription to a newsletter, which can be easily found on the home page, as well as on the bottom of each page. There is no out-linking, as everything is contained within the website.

User Enjoyment

The website is built to mimic or give a preview of what style of games Failbetter creates, with specific attention to the use of dark colors and images. This makes the viewer feel more immersed in the overall experience of interacting with not only the website but the games and company as well.

Each page within the website is full of well written and subject-specific information, which is usually accompanied by complementary images, motion graphics, and videos to enhance user experience and enjoyment. Navigating through these pages is akin to the adventures in the games Failbetter creates, which are text and image heavy. This makes the user feel as if the website is an extension of those games, again adding to a positive experience.

The simple layout coupled with the rich and easily accessible information of Failbetter Games website all adds to an overall positive and enjoyable experience. The addition of a Forum for players of Failbetter's games helps give a reason for users to frequently return to the website, in turn boosting popularity, and providing an incentive for Failbetter to maintain interesting and pleasurable user enjoyment.

Analysis of Rockstar Games Website

<http://www.rockstargames.com>



Figure 3: Rockstar Games Logo

Aesthetic design

The overall aesthetic of the Rockstar Games website gives the viewer a bright and exciting look into what games they promote. This website gives onlookers a new and unique style of website setup that will attract those that are used to the typical gaming advertisements. They have provided a large window of videos/images at the beginning of the page in which viewers can click and observe their popular games at the current time.

The home webpage is full of images and interactive videos that show games in detail and advertise discounts for certain items. Towards the bottom, Rockstar Games has provided multiple discussion platforms where users can express their opinions on games, giving them a chance to voice their thoughts. The expressive illustrations and intriguing advertisements make the website appeal to viewers and potential buyers by influencing their senses.

Ease of Use

Rockstar Games has made sure that their website is very easy to reach from the general web and that their brand is not difficult to find. They have made the website incredibly simple to navigate with clear direction and specificity. Not only do they provide very pronounced and labeled short cuts at the top of the webpage, but they also give visuals for each category when the short cuts are scrolled over with a mouse. This makes information extremely accessible to those who seek more in-depth knowledge about their games and company.

Their search directory has pre-written options that are aligned with their most popular searches in order to achieve maximum ease-of-use for the viewer. With a clear questions bar, the user can look up anything and everything related to their video games and find a multitude of resources available instantly. After typing in a topic of interest, the website shows the user an abundance of different articles pertaining to the subject. Most, if not all, are popular questions posed by the gaming community that are answered by professionals who have hands-on experience with that particular video game.

User Enjoyment

The quality of information on this website is decently high. Rockstar Games has made sure that every visual has a corresponding written response that explains the visual and provides the viewer with further information on the topic. For example, each picture of a game that is being promoted has a few sentences underneath that describe the game to the viewer. The website also uses bright, high-contrast, and blood-like colors to show the type of games that the company provides on their website. It coordinates visuals with representation so the user is aware of what kind of video games the company is likely to offer.

When it comes to out-linking, it appears that the website keeps on information on the current database. There is no need to visit other websites to attain information because Rockstar Games has made sure to answer all possible questions and concerns within their own interface. The easy-to-follow layout mixed with bright and contrasting colors brings forth a very user-friendly platform that welcomes even the most novice video game players.

Though there are a lot of positives with this website, there are also qualities that we do not think need to be used. For example, the large visuals can be helpful but it may seem overwhelming to some viewers. There is almost too much going on and it is hard to focus on one thing without attention being pulled to another. Another potential issue is the random amounts of blank space on the home page that make things feel a tad off balance. The website could be a bit more organized in the sense of cohesiveness. But as previously said, the main reason we chose Rockstar is because of the engagement with users, and they have achieved that.

Analysis of Blizzard Entertainment website

<https://www.blizzard.com/en-us/>



Figure 4: Blizzard Entertainment Logo

Aesthetic Design

Their design is modern and easy to navigate. The plethora of pictures, as well as the headers, guide the user. The games are clearly presented and easy to find. There are three sections of the website that are advertised, but there is little information other than a picture and title. The website is colorful. The only other colors come from a large number of game advertisements on the homepage.

Ease of Use

There are popular games clearly advertised on the homepage. Clicking on each game individually takes the user to more information about the game. This is all accomplished while staying in Blizzard.com. Therefore, there is minimal out-linking. The website does not have an obvious search bar, making it difficult to search for specific information. This could discourage someone from looking for a specific game that is not clearly advertised. It is very easy to find their user support.

User Enjoyment

The Blizzard.com website is inviting and easy to use. The game genres are clearly stated and easy to find. The homepage directs the user to the newest and most popular games. Just one click gets the user to all the information he/she needs. The pages connect well and stay within the Blizzard.com website. Therefore there is no out-linking. Finding customer service is easy, though it is difficult to find how to contact them. There are multiple Facebook accounts linked to the page. One would make it easier for customers to find the information they need.

Conclusion

Over the years, the number of people playing video games via the internet has been on the rise. Thus, the number of online gaming sites has skyrocketed. Some are more popular than others. WebTech was approached by Storm Studios to analyze these websites, and obtain data that would help Storm Studios improve their website.

Thousands of websites were considered and multiple surveys sent via online gaming messaging boards. From this, three qualities of popular sites came to light: Aesthetic Design, Ease of Use, and User Enjoyment.

Our company concluded that three websites best exemplify one or more of these qualities. Those are the following:

failbettergames.com, blizzard.com, and rockstargames.com.

We analyzed these websites based on their aesthetic design, ease of use, and user enjoyment. To aid our analysis, we sent out surveys to popular gaming messaging boards. We received 3,400 responses to our survey. The appendices summarize the survey and the results. The results confirm that better aesthetic design, ease of use and user enjoyment would improve the website.

Our analysis ranked Failbetter Games the highest in all three qualities with 91%. This conclusion was confirmed by our survey results. The rockstargames.com and blizzard.com websites were ranked second and third respectively by the survey respondents. However, it was difficult for us to rank them, as all three websites showed significant use of all three qualities.

Both the Rockstar games and Blizzard Entertainment websites showed difficulty in use or scored lower in aesthetic design.

Recommendations

We recommend that Storm Studios integrate the strongest elements from all three company websites into the Storm Studios website. Specifically, these elements are:

- A distinct aesthetic style which speaks to the genre and attitude of the games Storm Studios creates. This style should incorporate appropriate colors and images to attract and keep user attention.
- A clear navigational system based around a search bar and drop down menus, which allows users to navigate through the website with ease. This system should be available on every page and should not link with other websites.
- An eye-catching and informative advertising system based on clickable images which redirect users to further information about the product and where it can be purchased, if not directly available from the website. This will boost user awareness and sales of Storm Studio's products.

Appendix A: Community survey on options to improve website

This survey was authorized by WebTech Consulting to receive feedback from our web-savvy community. It was used to determine which elements of web design users found the most significant in the eyes of future video game customers. Community members were asked how they felt about different design features for potential video game company sites. Survey-takers were allowed to provide a single affirmative response for each question given.

1. I believe a website's **Aesthetic Design** is one of the most important elements of website design.

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

2. I believe a website's **Colorful Appeal** is one of the most important elements of website design.

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

3. I believe a website's **Ease of Use** is one of the most important elements of website design.

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

4. I believe a website's **User Enjoyment** is one of the most important elements of website design.

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

5. I believe a website's **Product Promotion** is one of the most important elements of website design.

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Appendix B: Community survey on options to improve website results

Out of 5,000 surveys, 3,400 were returned. The following table reveals the results:

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Aesthetic Design	100	950	2,350
Colorful Appeal	1,750	1,420	230
Ease of Use	190	1,220	1,990
User Enjoyment	295	975	2,130
Product Promotion	1,870	1,210	320

Community survey on options to improve website

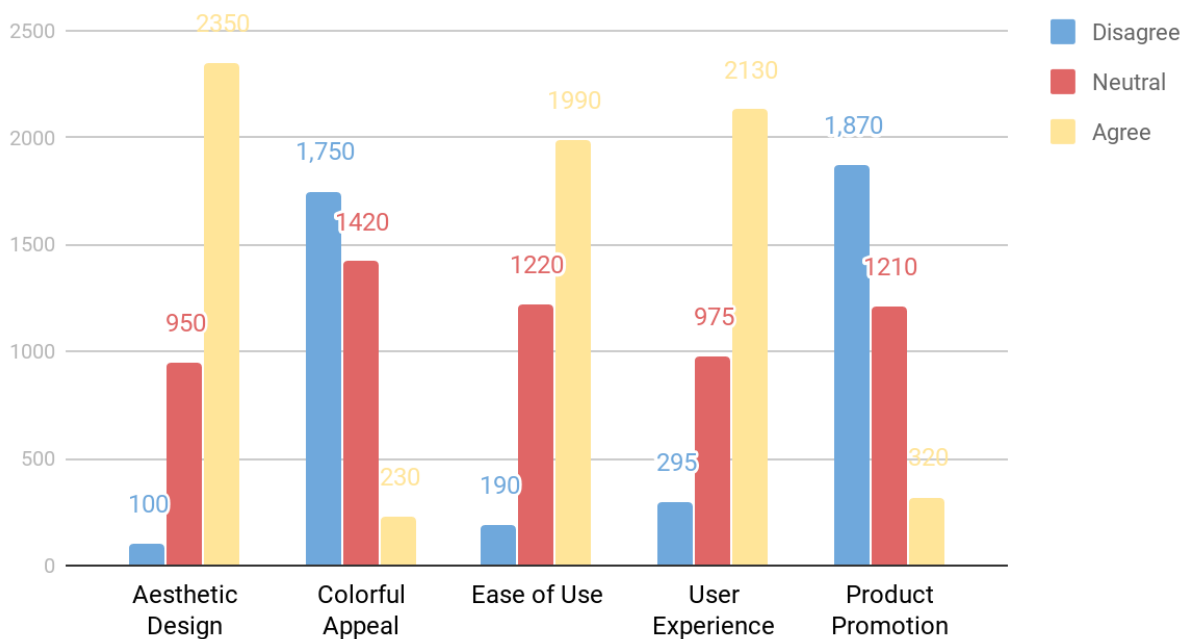


Figure 5: Chart of improving website survey results

Appendix C: Gaming website user satisfaction

This survey was authorized by WebTech Consulting to receive feedback from our web-savvy community. It was used to see how the websites ranked in the eyes of the everyday user of video game websites. The survey-takers were encouraged to fill it out and return it within one week's time. They were asked to rank the websites on a scale of 1 to 10 on which one, overall, had the best design and function. This included Storm Studio's current website.

1. <http://www.Stormstudios.com>

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. <http://www.Failbettergames.com>

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. <http://www.Rockstargames.com>

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. <http://www.Blizzard.com>

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Appendix D: Gaming website user satisfaction results

Out of 5,000 surveys that were sent out, 3,700 were returned within the week long time frame. The following table shows the results of this survey using percentages out of 100.

Gaming company website	Visitors that approve of the overall design and function
Stormstudios.com	42%
Failbettergames.com	91%
Rockstargames.com	83%
Blizzard.com	76%

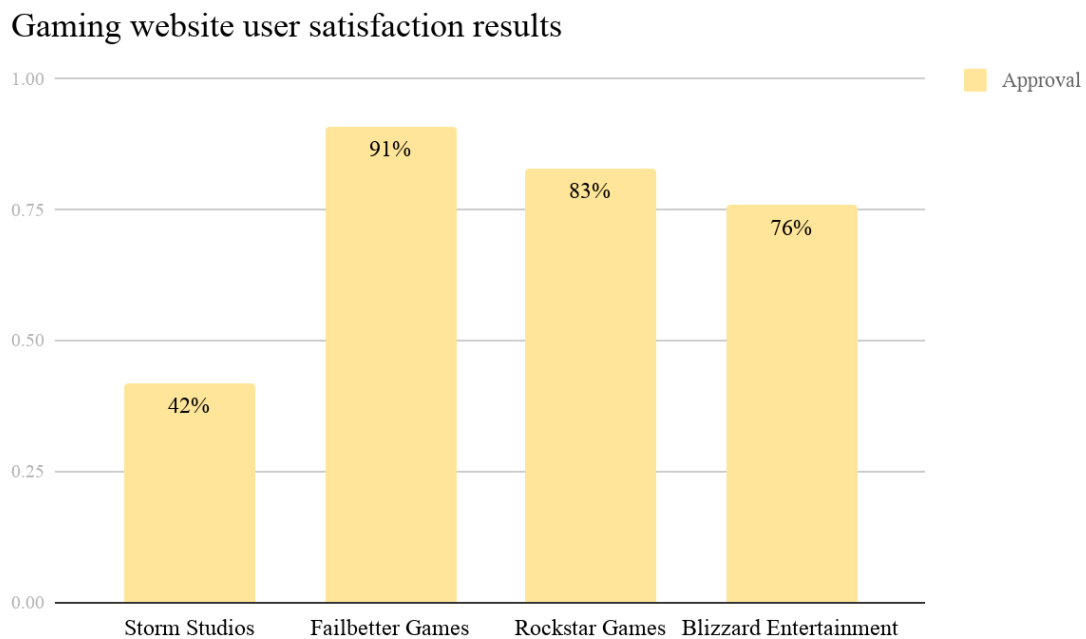


Figure 6: Chart of user satisfaction survey results