

The Power of Cause-Driven Video Game Advertising

James Draper, Founder & CEO, [Bidstack](#)

At this very moment, millions of Americans are busy catching fish and making home improvements inside *Animal Crossing*, drifting carts across courses in *DiRT Rally 2.0*, and matching up juicy gummies on *Gummy Drop*. Entire digital universes are built and expanded upon every second of the day, making video games one of the most active and engaging environments in the world right now.

Since the start of the [pandemic](#), gaming in the U.S. has [risen](#) by 45 percent. Female gamers made up [41 percent of the U.S. gaming population](#) in 2020, up from 38 percent in 2007. The majority of gamers are 18-34 years-old, but there's been a [steady](#) increase in the number of gamers 34 – 54 years-old, and even a slight increase in the 65+ age category (which makes up 6 percent of gamers in the U.S.). It's also worth noting that gamers were most likely to make between \$67k – \$76k annually. The point here is that stereotypes of gamers are now completely outdated – the majority of the U.S. population plays some sort of game. With that comes an incredible opportunity to use in-game advertising as a viable marketing channel to share crucial information with once hard-to-reach audiences.

Catching Audiences While Actively Engaged

Before in-game advertising is written off as a novelty concept, consider this – as of January 2020, an [estimated](#) 66 percent of the U.S. population are active gamers. Not all are battling it out on *Call of Duty*, though. There's a large, diverse audience locked in on the game's universe, and in that, an opportunity to deliver advertising messages for

candidates and causes without disrupting the gaming experience.

The numbers are enticing, but what really sets in-game environments apart from traditional display advertising is the level of attention a gamer has at any given time. Recently, Lumen Research partnered with our company, Bidstack, to measure players' attention levels with eye-tracking software, and the results were astonishing. In-game ads outperformed traditional ad channels every time, sometimes by more than double.

The Biden-Harris campaign recently [made waves](#) when it launched custom campaign signs for the yards of players in the immensely popular game *Animal Crossing*. The initiative to drive awareness of the campaign and the upcoming vote helped replace real-world events impacted by the pandemic. This use of advertising dollars is a creative way that meets voters where they're spending their time and promotes unity among campaign supporters.

There is rarely a new avenue of advertising that offers this kind of attention from audiences, hence why gaming is poised to rise in popularity across all industries. Tending to private islands, managing a football team, and racing treacherous courses is what has people *truly* paying attention, and might be the tipping point of getting them to adopt a campaign, cause or listen to public service messages.

Endless Opportunities to Integrate Ads into Game's Universe

Arguably gaming's most incredible opportunity for advertisers is that ads no longer have to be thought of as a static overlay. They can be seamlessly integrated into the metaverses of these games, allowing ads to be delivered in a more pleasing way than the typical bombardment of display ads and promoted posts.

This summer, several of the UK's leading game companies partnered with the government to embed COVID-specific public safety messaging into some of the country's most popular video games. [The "Stay Home. Save Lives." campaign](#) quickly spread public health messages without disrupting the gaming experience.

These messages were seamlessly placed into each game quickly and creatively. For instance, *DiRT Rally 2.0* – a racing game played by millions of people since its 2019 launch – displayed the message throughout its courses on banners and roadside billboards that were already a natural part of the game. The ad placements are highly noticeable and can host and switch out any type of creative almost instantaneously.



Games host infinite types of playing environments, from ones that mimic the world we know to ones that have created an entirely different universe. Provided the player's experience and the integrity of the environment are always front-of-mind, in-game ads can spread important messages rapidly.

In-game offers more than simply advertising space, it's a community

Gaming is home to a vibrant and active community where a diverse audience is not only playing but chatting and streaming with one another. For public service campaigns, there is a powerful opportunity to extend a message in order to create solidarity and unity amongst these players.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently did exactly that with their March 2020 campaign, [#PlayApartTogether](#). Similar to the “Stay Home. Saves Lives.” campaign, the WHO’s campaign was aimed at keeping people inside, playing together while maintaining social distancing. It was adopted by some of the industry’s most powerful and title-rich gaming companies, who then created special events, exclusives, activities, rewards, and inspiration into some of the most popular games in the world to show their support.

This activation proved that communities surrounding each game could come together and adopt a common cause. It spurred awareness, conversation, and compliance from those that saw and interacted with it. It’s unifying approach to one simple but crucial message allowed gaming companies to adopt it in ways that fit its communities – something that would be difficult to accomplish on most other platforms. The launch generated an enormous amount of positive mainstream media coverage as well, a nod to its impact, creativity, and ability to engage gaming audiences effectively.

In-game advertising has the potential to change how the public receives vital information moving forward. Provided campaigns and their creative assets are crafted and strategized to suit the game’s environment without intrusion, there’s more than enough evidence to show that players will see, listen, and take action.



About the Author: James is the founder and CEO of Bidstack, a leading in-game advertising platform that empowers developers, publishers and esport organisations to monetise the pre-existing advertising spaces in games as a source of revenue generation. Bidstack also works with

premium brands to place native ads into spaces that sit naturally within video games and most importantly protect the gaming experience. James founded Bidstack in 2015 utilising more than 15 years of commercial experience to launch his own business. Since the initial launch he has seen the company grow from a one-man operation to an international business which trades on the London Stock Exchange. Under his stewardship, Bidstack became the first ever Crowdcube funded company to go public. James pivoted the business into gaming in 2017 and leads the business as a whole, overseeing the company's direction, growth, development and vision.