

What makes gamers keep gaming?

December 9 2010, by Lisa Zyga



World of Warcraft is one of the most popular games in the world. Image credit: Blizzard Entertainment.

(PhysOrg.com) -- Creating Wikipedia has so far taken about 100 million hours of work, while people spend twice that many hours playing World of Warcraft in a single week, notes Jane McGonigal, a game designer and researcher at the Institute for the Future. McGonigal has written a soon-to-be-published book called "Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World."

She is one of several researchers who, according to an article in [The New York Times](#), are trying to understand and perhaps harness the power of the gaming mentality. As the article states, the average 21-year-old American has spent 10,000 hours playing computer games.

Researchers want to know why games are so addictive, and if we could learn things from games that could encourage and motivate people to work better in the real world.

In some ways, game activities are similar to real-life activities. In both realms, people must solve problems, overcome obstacles, and achieve specific goals. Researchers have noted that, when people get into playing games, they seem to reach a mental state of high concentration and focus, similar to that achieved by great musicians and athletes. However, gamers get “in the zone” very quickly, while it usually takes years for the professionals in music and sports to train themselves to reach this level.

In the NYT article, some researchers pointed out a few ingredients that good games have in common: instant feedback, small rewards for small progress, occasional unexpected rewards, continual encouragement from the computer and other players, and a final sense of triumph. Together, these components motivate gamers to keep trying even after multiple failures, even if it means spending hours at the same game.

“One of the most profound transformations we can learn from games is how to turn the sense that someone has ‘failed’ into the sense that they ‘haven’t succeeded yet,’” said Tom Chatfield, a British journalist and the author of “Fun Inc.: Why Gaming Will Dominate the Twenty-First Century.”

Some game developers have started designing games that have positive real-world consequences. For instance, smartphone users can download an app for the nonprofit group First Aid Corps, and help create a worldwide map of where defibrillators are located for real-life cardiac emergencies. Researchers can also use virtual worlds to test ideas, such as national disaster policies or how financial bubbles and panics occur.

McGonigal thinks that there are enormous benefits that can be reaped by

engaging gamers to help solve real-world problems. The key is to convince them that it's still just a [game](#).

More information: via: [The New York Times](#)

© 2010 PhysOrg.com

Citation: What makes gamers keep gaming? (2010, December 9) retrieved 8 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-12-gamers-gaming.html>

| |
|--|
| <p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p> |
|--|