

**The Play Factor:  
Engaging the Audience in the Age of Social Media**

Alexandre Maron  
[www.theplayfactor.com](http://www.theplayfactor.com)

Dissertation submitted for the M.A. Degree in Media Management,  
University of Westminster

## **ABSTRACT**

Playing is a natural activity to everyone. With the new interactive technologies available all types of media converge to the digital platforms and are able to connect with the audience in new ways. This dissertation proposes the addition of a new layer of content to make media products more engaging and meaningful. It can be a useful tool to help the branding strategies of media companies and put them in synch with the contemporary Social Media standards.

The dissertation presents many forms of playing with the audience that are already available in various projects and companies and proposes a framework with questions that will help the Media Manager in the task of creating content inside these guidelines.

It shows how The New York Times is working to be up to date with the new developments building a team of media savvy programmers and designers that are looking for new ways for telling stories the NYT audience. And how the newspaper company puts the Play Factor in its contents even inadvertently.

*"Anthropology and its sister sciences have so far laid out too little stress on the concept of play and on the supreme importance to civilization of the play-factor."*

Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (1955), Foreword

*"(...)The bulk of time in serious social life is taken up with playing games. Hence games are both necessary and desirable."*

Eric Berne, *Games People Play* (1964), p. 54

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	2
1. INTRODUCTION .....	6
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	13
2.1 Game Design .....	18
3 – THE PLAY FACTOR.....	23
3.1 - First things first: what is the Play Factor?.....	23
3.2 - Why should a media product play with its audience? .....	23
3.3 - The game of life.....	25
3.4 - The editors as puppet-masters .....	26
3.5 - Many ways to play .....	28
3.5.1 - Games with a purpose .....	29
3.5.2 - Not always a game .....	32
3.6 - The Play Factor framework.....	35
3.6.1- PF19Q.....	36
4. PRESENTATION .....	47
4.1 - The Play Factor at work .....	47
4.1.1 - eBay.....	47
4.1.2 - Facebook and LinkedIn.....	48
4.1.3 - Google Maps.....	49
4.1.4 - Amazon .....	49
4.2 Case Study: The New York Times is not playing. Really? .....	51
5. CONCLUSION.....	54
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	58
7. APPENDICES.....	60
7.1 – Interview with Aron Pilhofer , editor of Interactive News Technologies of The New York Times.....	60
7.2 – Interview with Jesse Schell, author of The Art of Game Design .....	63

## FIGURES

Figure 2.1 – The three ego-states .....	15
Figure 2.2 – Transactions .....	16
Figure 3.1 – A screen example of the game Squigl .....	29
Figure 3.2 – Screens of the game Peace Maker .....	30
Figure 3.3 – The map with the sightings of the brazilian singer Belchior .....	31
Figure 3.4 – Conventional food well presented .....	33
Figure 3.5 – Food presented in a playful way .....	33
Figure 4.1 – A screen of the feature Faces of the Dead .....	51
Figure 4.2 – The Word Train, the feature of election day 2008 .....	52

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*This is not a game.* The phrase became the motto of Alternate Reality Games (ARGs), a new breed of interactive narrative established with the emergence of new technologies in the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century (Szulborski, 2005).

In ARGs, one person or a group of individuals called puppet-masters create a narrative so subtle that the player will have trouble telling what is real or just part of the game. To achieve that effect, the puppet-masters fuse their game mechanics and components with day-to-day experiences in order to make them look as real as possible.

They communicate with the players through e-mail and instant messaging systems like Windows Live Messenger and Google Talk. They post videos on You Tube and Vimeo and create fictional websites developed in rich detail. On some of these games, there are phone numbers with real people behind them, actively receiving the calls and interacting with the players. They even connect their story with real news stories to make their game narrative look more realistic.

This illusion is possible in part because of a few reasons:

1. Our society became intensely mediated by digital interfaces;
2. These digital interfaces resemble computer games;
3. These interfaces can be easily reproduced with a computer, an internet connection and some suspension of disbelief.

There is a point to be made here about how we became a playable society through the manipulation of our view of reality with the interfaces we created, mostly digital.

The subject is not new. In the book *Homo Ludens*, written in 1938 by the

Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, the innate interest of human beings for play is discussed in detail. And we are not talking about play simply in conjunction with games, but the broader sense of the word. The play doesn't need to be competitive, but it needs to be fun in some way for the player. Animals play for various reasons, and they seem to need this experience. Humans appear to have an important relationship with play; it's not about indulgence. Instead, it looks like a human requirement that could be described on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, developed by the American psychologist Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper *A Theory of Human Motivation*.

What changed in our society was the development of tools that enable us to manipulate data and content in ways that make the activity of playing with them easy and, when well designed, pleasurable. Some of these activities are even turned into actual games. But with the emergence of the digital technologies, play became embedded in various activities.

It's not a huge leap of logic to think that video and computer games may have had some influence in the visual and the mechanics of our contemporary interfaces in serious applications like internet banking. It may have happened because the people that designed them grew up using video games and computer games. It was only natural that an active feedback started to happen. In the book *Interface Culture*, Steven Johnson describes this process in detail, showing how the use of word processors changed the process of writing and how spreadsheets like Microsoft Excel completely changed the way people relate to numbers, as they tweaked and played with data and its visualization. These interfaces changed the way we understand and interact with the world around us.

Looking again at Maslow's Hierarchy, it's no surprise that sex is so popular on the internet, with thousands of services and billions of dollars in revenues. Sex is the one physiological need that can be immediately sold through these digital services. If we revise one by one the other "steps" of the hierarchy, we

will see that the items inside Safety, Love, Esteem and Self-actualization are related to some of the most popular (and sometimes lucrative) services of our digital landscape: social networks, health, insurance, financial.

Mass media started not with the invention of the movable type, but with its popularization, which is associated with the rise of literacy in Europe. Clay Shirky, author of the book *Here Comes Everybody*, says in his lectures that “technology has to become boring enough to be socially interesting”. Societies need time to completely digest a potentially disruptive technology in order for its potential to become reality.

The rise of digital technologies for the consumer market in the last three decades enabled a level of control over content in the hands of who was only a passive audience before. Creative tools that were expensive or complicated became cheaper and, therefore, more popular than ever. If people were shocked by the explosion of simple film photographic cameras in the 1960s and 1970s, the camcorders in the 1980s and 1990s, then nothing prepared them for what was going to happen when it all became digital and easily shareable through services like You Tube and Flickr.

With these changes, it became possible to join an active conversation. Newspapers have had letters or opinions pages for centuries. But once people were able to comment in real time in a breaking news story without leaving their homes, things started to change. When drivers are able to call radio stations and give them updates about traffic, there is a shift in the roles. Who gives the news to whom? When people start to be witnesses of a news story and even film or photograph it, they are completely destroying the barriers we have come to expect between journalists and the rest of the news reading public. And thus things are suddenly disrupted. There is no way back.

As we moved our view of the world more and more to electronic media, we changed the way the individuals and/or groups interact with media, and one of



the results is that the classic monolithic structure became less and less attractive for the new audience habits that surfaced.

These audiences were scattered around the city, the state, the country and even the world. They didn't have the means to connect and see how many they were or how exclusive were their subjects. They didn't have anywhere to meet and talk about whatever passions or hates they had. When the commercial internet came together in the 1990s, it was a deeply transforming stage for audiences; the contemporary chapter of a process that started decades before with the slow fusion of media conglomerates and mass media experiences.

People started to "meet" virtually. The concept was so new that we even used quotation marks to assign it as a metaphor. Today, meeting virtually is so common that the use of quotes with the word meeting for a teleconference, as an example, is no longer needed. People formed groups of interest, and companies and entrepreneurs perceived the value of these interactions and started to gather this interests and knowledge. The crowds arrived, and they were valuable and easy to target as they organized themselves in communities of interest and affinity.

The behavior of the audience changed throughout the coming to prevalence of computers and portable devices as iPods, mobile phones or PDAs. These technologies and the digital connected environment changed the way people interacted with their old media products. Music, video and text started to travel through the world in seconds and the subject of piracy (and the discussion about what is really pirated content at all) became more and more relevant.

Through these new technologies and consumer habits, the traditional media companies saw their business models turn to dust. The music industry struggled, agonized and is completely transformed now. The newspapers seem to be the victim of the moment, with magazines following closely in their

wake.

Companies that don't want to die need to find a way to translate or evolve the basic proposals and premises of their products, be they a newspaper, a magazine, a radio station or a TV channel. Or else media conglomerates that cover all these platforms need to streamline and reinvent their value chains to find efficiency and keep value.

The buzzwords keep coming. Sometimes they are products, as Twitter or Facebook, at other times, the buzzwords come from concepts, like social media and viral marketing. A media manager needs to look at all these possible concepts and tools, and has to use some or all of them in a way that serve the goals of the company and the interests of the audience. All this reinvention has to happen in an environment of diminishing resources and revenue streams exactly because the business models that served media companies so well for decades are at a crossroads.

The purpose of this dissertation for the Media Management Masters course of the University of Westminster is to propose a practical framework with questions and concepts that will help the media manager in this environment. This proposed framework is based on a look the fields of game design and social media strategic design.

It has no ambition to be definitive in any way. This field is evolving continuously, with unpredictable developments happening all the time. But this can be seen as a beta version, a work in progress. A development of what will become a workable methodology, as the field evolves. To keep track of this progress, a blog was created: [www.theplayfactor.com](http://www.theplayfactor.com).

This research points out that most of the success stories of the last fifteen years show products with strong play components (that we will call Play Factor). These successful companies built a system of challenges and

rewards that engage the audience and make them come back for more time and time again. These challenges were sometimes wrapped with smart interaction design purpose and with clever social media conceptual devices that helped make them known and respected by thousands and sometimes millions of users. Some of the techniques and concepts used were more obvious than others, but if we look again at Maslow's hierarchy of needs, many concepts will start making sense. We will dissect the components used by these companies and products and try to integrate them in our proposed framework.

This proposed methodology still needs to be used in the real world and it will evolve and change through time and testing. The focus of the methodology is to help build media products connected with the new technologies and audience needs and interests. So it's about content development, wrapped and designed for certain specific purposes. It is not about business models and revenue streams directly. Yet the objective is to help make media content engaging enough that the audience will come back repeatedly; make the conversation and the relationship between media and audience flow in a way that it is entertaining and engaging.

It is not branding, but it has a clear objective of serving brand strategy, since it has to work inside your branding and marketing guidelines. It is a social media tool. Designed with very practical and pragmatic purposes: make better media products, adjusted to the audience of the 21st century.

The purpose of this work will be to dissect the types of play that the new audiences are expecting from the media products they are interested in. The next step will be to develop a series of questions that every media manager should ask themselves and their stakeholders about their products, in order to incorporate a strong Play Factor into the conceptual DNA of the product discussed. It will be integrated with the contemporary guidelines for Social Media and Interaction Design strategies. This dissertation will show a series

of examples of good ideas from media companies that fit in the proposed framework.

Once the theoretical practicalities are established, this dissertation will look at an existing example; how The New York Times, arguably the most respected and well known newspaper in the world, is trying to fit into this new realm. We do take into consideration that the team that is rethinking the NYT do not want to be associated with anything that resembles game design. This detail alone points to the fact that the Play Factor, the subject of this research, is something so deeply embedded in our mind that we can't even see it anymore. Often, though we don't even realize it, the only reason we are interested in something is because our interlocutor is, in some way, playing with us.

This is the final assignment for the MA Media Management programme of the University of Westminster, UK. This research was supervised by Charles Brown, the course leader.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea of creating engaging content to make the audience more interested is not new. It's the goal of any serious media managers. Engaging content means a loyal audience that will come back for more and make the product economically viable.

The point of this work is to give the media manager a methodology that will make a good use of the new trends that surfaced with the evolving of the new digital tools, connecting the audience within itself (forming groups of interest) and with the media companies. The proposal of the Play Factor, the term used in this dissertation, is to offer a metaphor and a framework that will resonate with what the modern audiences expect from a contemporary media product: interactivity, obviously, but also an almost invisible set of challenges and stimuli that, after the connection, will give the audience some kind of reward, be it emotional or intellectual.

Two authors were instrumental in the decision of making this research: the historian Johan Huizinga (author of the book *Homo Ludens*, published in English in 1955), and the psychologist Eric Berne, creator of the concept of Transactional Analysis and author of *Games People Play* (1964), among other books.

*Homo Ludens* sees play as a basic instinct and interest of human beings. "Play is older than culture, for culture, however inadequately defined, always presupposes human society, and animals have not waited for man to teach them their playing", says Huizinga in the beginning of the book. "Animals play just like men", adds the author (Huizinga, 1955, p. 1)

Huizinga traces the origin of the word play and looks at its use in various languages, but in the context of this dissertation, one of the great findings of the book is the way it shows how play is embedded in various activities.

If you have an activity that has rules or guidelines, a ritual, a level of challenge and some kind of reward, you have play. "Wherever there is a catch-word ending in -ism we are hot on the tracks of a play-community." (Huizinga, 1955, p. 203)

He states that culture and play come together as twins, in parallel. But many intellectual constructs of culture emerge from play and crystallize as knowledge: folklore, poetry, philosophy, in various forms of judicial and social life. At some point, says the author, "the play-element is hidden behind cultural phenomena. But at any moment, even in a high developed civilization, the play-'instinct' may reassert itself in full force, drowning the individual and the mass in the intoxication of an immense game." (Huizinga, 1955, p. 46-47)

We jump to *Games People Play*, where Eric Berne describes in detail Transactional Analysis, a process developed by the author to interpret the mechanics of social interaction. He establishes concepts as *Social Intercourse* and *Stimulus-Hunger*, where he states the necessity of constant human interaction. (Berne, 1964, p. 13)

Berne then explains *Structure-Hunger* as the need of a certain logic structure for social intercourses. In his example, he describes the anxiety people feel when they think about what to say after hello and the discomfort caused by any hiatus when the subjects involved in a dialogue don't know what to say next. (Berne, 1964, p. 15)

The author establishes three ego-states: Child, Parent and Adult. So, in any interaction, the way people assume these roles will make all the difference to the success or failure of the interaction. If there is dissonance in the relationship between the roles two individuals assume, confrontation will arise. The Child-ego brings intuition, creativity, spontaneous drive and enjoyment. The Adult-ego is necessary for survival. It processes data and

computer probabilities essential to deal effectively with the outside world. The Parent-ego enables the individual to act effectively as an actual parent, but also gives the individual that standing of “that is the way it’s done”, making responses automatic and saving time. (Berne, 1964, p. 26-27)



Figure 2.1 The three ego-states

With the Structural Diagram in mind, it’s time to look at how the transactions work. Berne states that as long as transactions are complementary, communication can, in principle, proceed indefinitely. It means that an Adult stimulus receives an Adult response or a Parent stimulus gets a Child response. But there are moments when an Adult stimulus that should receive an Adult response gets a Child response instead. This is when problems arise. (Berne, 1964, p. 29)

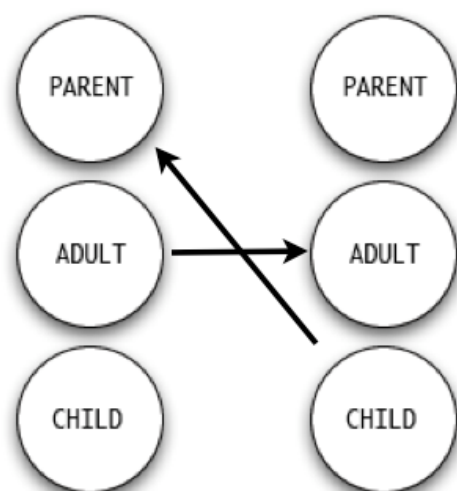


Figure 2.2 – Transactions

The simplest forms of social activity are procedures and rituals. A catholic mass is a ritual deeply connected to the Parent-ego. It is full of tradition and the procedures are designed to go as they are, no questions asked.

These rituals are designed to provide the individuals with what is called a stroke, a unit of interaction. So, in the daily ritual of saying hello to a neighbor, there are options that go from two strokes (hi-hi) to others that evolve along a spectrum to a full dialogue with 200 strokes and include detailed interactions about family and work. (Berne, 1964, p. 33-35)

These social intercourses can be divided in Pastimes and Games. The Pastimes are organized interactions with some defined theme (like cars, animals, politics) and the only purpose of killing time until some expected event, no strings attached and no major or hidden objectives. (Berne, 1964, p. 38-39) The Games, however, are more like pastimes with a defined agenda. It means that the players have sometimes a hidden outcome in mind. Games, in Berne's definition, have a pay-off, a reward. They happen most of the time regardless of the fact that the people involved are unaware that they are "playing". (Berne, 1964, p. 44-45)



Berne gives as an example the game of “If It Weren’t for You”:

*“Mrs. White complained that her husband severely restricted her social activities, so that she had never learned to dance. Due to changes in her attitude brought about psychiatric treatment, her husband became less sure of himself and more indulgent. Mrs. White was then free to enlarge the scope of her activities. She signed up for dancing classes, and then discovered to her despair that she had a morbid fear of dance floors and had to abandon this project.*

*This unfortunate adventure, along with similar ones, laid out some important aspects of her marriage. Out of her many suitors, she had picked a domineering man for a husband. She was then in a position to complain that she could do all sorts of things ‘If it weren’t for you.’ Many of her woman friends had domineering husbands, and when they met for their morning coffee, they spent a good deal of time playing ‘If It Weren’t For Him.’” (Berne, 1964, p. 45-46)*

There is a taxonomy of types of games that goes deep as describing the number of players, the currency (words, money, parts of the body), Clinical types (obsessive-compulsive, paranoid...), Zonal (oral, anal, phallic), Psychodynamic (counterphobic, introjective, projective), Instinctual (masochistic, sadistic...). This is followed by a detailed thesaurus of types of games people use socially to achieve their personal objectives in their day-to-day lives.

Both *Games People Play* and *Homo Ludens* are seminal, and the ideas espoused by them have been expanded by other authors and revised by the fact that the way people related evolved through the decades after these books were written. We will see more information about new ideas and developments in the section dedicated to the body of this research.

These two authors, Huizinga and Berne, made it clear that “play” is embedded in our society in various systems and rituals in a way that we

are mostly unaware. With the emergence of increasingly interactive technologies, our media became playable in novel and unprecedented ways.

To build the methodology and the framework for the Play Factor, it was necessary to study two main fields: Social Media and Game Design. The literature of these fields is very broad and mostly new.

### **2.1 Game Design**

The largest body of bibliography comes from Game Design. It is very well established and today has a strong theoretical methodology. But there are many books about videogames, 3D animation, character design and coding. As such, this is not the focus of this research; this paper's main concept the creative conceptual framework needed to help media managers find solutions for more subtle problems.

The first stop in every major book of game design is to define what a game is. The definitions will vary, with added details coming from each new author who throws his hat into the ring. Let's look at what Huizinga has to say about the definition of game:

"We might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside ordinary life as being 'not serious', but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner." (Huizinga, 1955, )

"A game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome." (Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, 2004, p. 80)

The veteran game designer Chris Crawford defines games in his book *Chris Crawford on Game Design* (2003), which is an updated version of his seminal work *The Art of Computer Game Design*, published in 1984.

“First, a game is a closed formal system that subjectively represents a subset of reality. Let us examine each term of this statement carefully. By 'closed' I mean that the game is complete and self sufficient as a structure. The model world created by the game is internally complete; no reference need be made to agents outside of the game. Some badly designed games fail to meet this requirement. Such games produce disputes over the rules, for they allow situations to develop that the rules do not address. The players must then extend the rules to cover the situation in which they find themselves. This situation always produces arguments. A properly designed game precludes this possibility; it is closed because the rules cover all contingencies encountered in the game.” (retrieved from a digital version of *The Art of Computer Game Design*, retrieved on 10/07/2009 from <http://www.vancouver.wsu.edu/fac/peabody/game-book/Chapter1.html>)

The last and most influential book to the approach of this dissertation is Jesse Schell's *The Art of Game Design*, published in 2008. He looks at various of the academic definitions of game, such as the two above, and tries to find a list of qualities that games need to have. He ends up with ten:

1. Games are entered willfully
2. Games have goals
3. Games have Conflict
4. Games have rules
5. Games can be won and lost
6. Games are interactive
7. Games have challenge

8. Games can create their own internal value
9. Games engage players
10. Games are closed formal systems

He then simplify down to a broad definition that is very useful to applying the concept to other medias:

“A Game is a problem solving activity, approached with a playful attitude.”  
(Schell, 2008, p. 37)

With the advent of videogames in the 1970s, and their evolution as a media and a business, games-based literature started to integrate concepts of the new field of neuroscience and expanded the meaning of the concept of play.

The concept of play was expanded to the search for the meaning of “fun”, something that should come from the activity of play. To achieve a definition and a path to this end, the game designer Raph Koster explained in the book *A Theory of Fun* (2005) how our brain is a “voracious consumer of patterns. A soft pudgy gray Pac-Man of concepts. Games are exceptionally tasty patterns to eat up”. (Koster, 2005, p. 14)

Koster uses the word “chunk” to describe the brain processing information and turning it into a compressed concept, easier and faster to access. The idea is borrowed from a paper from 1956 called *The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our Capacity for Processing Information*, written by the linguist George A. Miller.

The author states that the “fun” happens when we are actively processing information in the zone between being challenged and being able to face the challenge, overcome it and be rewarded. We have fun while we chunk; when there are no more things to chunk, we get bored.

For this research, the studies went to literature that would apply to the creation of any kind of game, not only videogames or board games or puzzles. The broader we aim, the closer we will get to find an adaptable framework.

The Play Factor that we are looking for in this research will give fun to the audience in subtle ways. Give them something to chunk even when they won't notice it. One of the goals is to create and embed games, puzzles and just playfields in spaces that otherwise would be seen as conventional media: the website of a magazine, newspaper, TV or radio show, a comic or a textbook.

Most games happen inside what was called by Huizinga "The Magic Circle" (Huizinga, 1955, p. 10), a conceptual space where the game happens, the playground. We have to think about play without any mention of a magic circle. The playground has no place when the Play Factor needs to be subtle and completely embedded in a media product.

The playing experience has to be meaningful. It occurs when the relationship between actions and outcomes in a game are both discernable and integrated into the larger context of the game. Creating meaningful play is the goal of successful game design. (Zimmerman and Salen, 2004, p. 34).

To achieve meaning, the designer will have to have clear goals, to plan ahead every step of the game creation and understand the necessary symbols to correctly represent the concept. (Zimmerman and Salen, 2004, p. 40-43).

A huge part of designing a playing experience is about double seduction. First, the designer has to develop an experience that will seduce the

audience-player to the subtle magic circle. Then, the next challenge is to make the player want to continue playing. (Zimmerman and Salen, 2004, p. 333).

## **3 – THE PLAY FACTOR**

### ***3.1 - First things first: what is the Play Factor?***

To state it simply: it is the component of play, of fun that can be embedded in a product. This is done often in many situations, as we will see in some of the examples in this paper, but most of the time there is no method, no process guiding the principle. The proposal of this work is to look at what is being done in terms of building a common framework for the Play Factor, and try to find a workable concept that could be applied to media products.

With that in mind, we can see how it would be possible to embed the Play Factor in subtle and engaging ways. It needs to be a clearly defined concept that is broad enough to be applied in many situations. And for the same reason, the Play Factor needs a framework to guide the creative impulse and make it work inside some clear guidelines.

Above all, we are approaching the defining of this concept from the business side. In order to be effective, the Play Factor needs to help the branding efforts of the Media Manager, bring the audience back repeatedly, and increase the profile of the product and the company inside a Social Media environment. It needs to be cost effective and executable under real cost and revenue stream conditions.

### ***3.2 - Why should a media product play with its audience?***

People play. It is natural. It is a behavior that emerges naturally from day to day activities. Huizinga (1955) says that, as we evolve as a society and some behaviors and rituals crystallize and become knowledge, we sometimes lose the sight of the game structures we have embedded everywhere. And they are really everywhere.

Game designers look at patterns to construct systems and define rules that will function as games. These patterns are everywhere waiting to feed the need for games. For example, The way people close a real state deal

becomes Monopoly. People already play with content in many ways, but remember that we are not talking about play only in the strict sense of gaming. The meaning is broader and includes play activities that would include only having fun or playing with a toy, with no rules.

Games and toys are different. If there is no association with goals, we have a toy. Games have purpose, rules, challenges and not necessarily winners, but a system of rewards. (Crawford, 2003).

The media managers can offer toys and games to their product audiences. And it can be done with almost any media platform, as we will soon see. But for the purpose of this dissertation, we will focus on digital media and websites as expanded versions of their non digital counterparts: a TV channel, a newspaper, a magazine, a movie a TV or a radio show.

So let's look at how people naturally relate to conventional media. Even today, they still collect magazines and newspapers, they cut and manipulate them, they use images in their art projects and show their collections to friends as a badge of honor. They use them as games and as toys.

The other characteristic of media is its natural ability to form communities, which happened long before the internet. These communities functioned differently because the tools were not at the right stage yet. So the meeting points of these communities could be the letter pages of the magazines and newspapers, or the moment when a disc jockey answered the phone in a radio station. They were there, but the barriers, the cost, if not prohibitively high, was high enough to make these groups harder to gather. This is in the past. Now, a website of a magazine or a newspaper is a meeting point. A hub, a place where people go to talk about things they care about. (Shirky, 2008)

Even modern television shows require cognitive work given the complexity of the story lines, the ever expanding cast of characters and the deep mythology. "To follow the narrative, you aren't just asked to remember. You're asked to analyze. This is the difference between intelligent shows and shows that force you to be intelligent", says Steven Johnson in EVerything Bad is



Good for You (2005). In shows like Mary Tyler Morre, for example, the viewer were used to have smart people saying interesting things in their living room. "The intellectual work happens onscreen, not off."

But there is more. With the creation of titles that are conceptualized as real multi platform, like Lost and Heroes, the fictional universe bleeds. They become multi platform franchises and the audience is called to a new relationship that looks a lot more with a conversation.

These fans will talk about their shows for months while they are on hiatus and speculate on new storylines. It helps the formation of a whole ecosystem around the franchise. Why they do it? Simple. It's a lot of fun.

These are the interests that the media manager has to be aware of and endeavour to make even stronger. That will happen with the proper methodology and with the right frameworks in place.

### ***3.3 - The game of life***

So the first goal is to understand that games can be different from what people normally expect. The independent creators are pushing the envelope and looking for new concepts and themes.

To start creating the Play Factor of a Media Product, it is necessary to have in mind the purpose of the audience. Exactly as it is necessary for a media manager to know his audience so that it is possible to target content that fits their needs. Why do they meet in that exact website. Is it a car magazine? They want to see cars, talk about them and find ways to know and have them. It is a science magazine, the sports section of a newspaper, a TV show about fashion? All the same. Some of the interests will change and from subject to subject the possible goals, challenges and rewards will be different.

People play Monopoly to make more money, buy more property. People play Risk for two reasons: to conquer the world or to accomplish some specific

objective given by the cards. These are competitive games. But we can look at a game like Sim City and see that the objectives there are different: build the best possible city. Make the citizens happy. Keep the cash flow in the black.

These games represent real life activities: real estate, war, running a city. The game designers looked at how these activities worked and built systems of rules, goals and rewards that would feed the needs of the player: interesting problems to solve in a playful way.

The first stage to putting the Play Factor in a media product is to ask questions about what your audience is looking for when they look at your product. It's not in the interest of a Media Product (at least most of the time) to build a complex board game and create a completely disconnected experience; the goal is to embed little stimuli and challenges that will keep things moving.

But sometimes, the chance to promote a literal game is too good to be ignored. The Media Manager should not let it slip. We will look at some interesting cases where the game is literal and works as an add-on to the experience of the product.

### ***3.4 - The editors as puppet-masters***

Editors and producers can learn a lot with Alternate Reality Games (ARGs). Let's look at the structure of an ARG and see how it could be useful not only as a practical tool but to promote your product, whatever it is. The idea here is to see what are the techniques that the Puppetmasters use in their day-to-day work and try to apply these concepts to other fields.

Their motto, as stated in the introduction of this paper, is "This is Not a Game". The ARG managers or Puppetmasters hide behind what they call "curtain", a conceptual veil. They go a long way to pretend that what is happening around the player is real. To this end, they use multiple platforms

to mete out information in a way that looks like a real conversation is taking place. Choosing these platforms is part of what makes an ARG successful. (Szulborski, 2005)

To understand an ARG, we need to have a look at the most popular ones: The Beast, I Love Bees and the Why So Serious campaign. All of these experiences came from the same group of creators, a company called 42 Entertainment, and were developed for big companies like Dreamworks, Microsoft and Warner Bros.

The Puppetmaster(s) develops a narrative and starts to define the many plot points it will have throughout the planned duration of the game. The team of creators develops websites, open e-mail accounts and profiles in social network websites like My Space, Facebook, Hi5 and Twitter and creates content for them. He has to plan for multiple threads so that if something unexpected happens, he will have content available and the flow of the experience will not just come to a sudden halt.

He decides all the messages and what hints will be given through them. With that in mind, it is time to decide which kind of message will go through which platform. When the narrative needs a video, a tweet, a blog post, a new status message in a Facebook profile? This is a very detailed and time-consuming task, and it is completely accomplished using with the new Social Media tools. The game is actively being influenced and changed by the players, because it doesn't work as a monologue. Instead, it is a conversation. The more the team behind the game plans, the easier it is to improvise when something unexpected happens.

Once the pieces are in place, it is time to open what is called a "rabbit hole", an event that will make a piece of the narrative visible to the world. The audience will go inside the fictional narrative through one or more of these holes. The first commercial ARG, nicknamed The Beast, happened in 2001 and helped promote the movie AI, directed by Steven Spielberg. In the previews, there was an odd credit: Jeanine Salla, Sentient Machine Therapist.

The curious fans Googled the name and found the website of Bangalore World University. Was it real? The search went from there, and the story evolved into a “whodunit” spreading through multiple sites, generating buzz for the movie and creating a passionate community of problem solvers.

(Szulborski, 2005, p. 93-97)

ARGs are a very curious tool. Until now, almost no one has been able to create one that is economically viable. All the major projects were sponsored by big companies using them as a promotion tool, looking for strong buzz throughout different platforms. The sneaky nature of an ARG is a problem for its economic viability.

But the techniques behind it show how the life of a modern media manager has to be. The tool can be useful for many kinds of media, in multiple platforms. And they may be able to help some businesses to gain access to a platform where they are not strong until now.

The ARG is an example of a full-fledged media activity happening completely inside a Social Media environment. And it's possible only inside this environment. Without the easy access to these digital tools, ARGs would not be possible.

### ***3.5 - Many ways to play***

Here, we have a look at the many different ways people are approaching the creation and the purpose of games, puzzles and toys. The last topic will analyze how The New York Times is trying to adapt to this new environment where its voice is only part of the discussion, compared to the past, where the audience simply passively listened to what the newspaper had to say.

### 3.5.1 - Games with a purpose

Games can be used to make boring activities interesting. When these boring actions are actually useful and can help other human beings, all the better. That is what GWAP (Games With A Purpose) is all about.

It was created by a group of scientists from Carnegie Mellon University: chief engineer Mike Crawford, graphic designer Ryan Staake, coders Mike Brotzman, Severin Hacker, Edith Law, Bryant Lee, Luis von Ahn, and Edison Tan. They had already worked on Google Image Labeler and other projects.

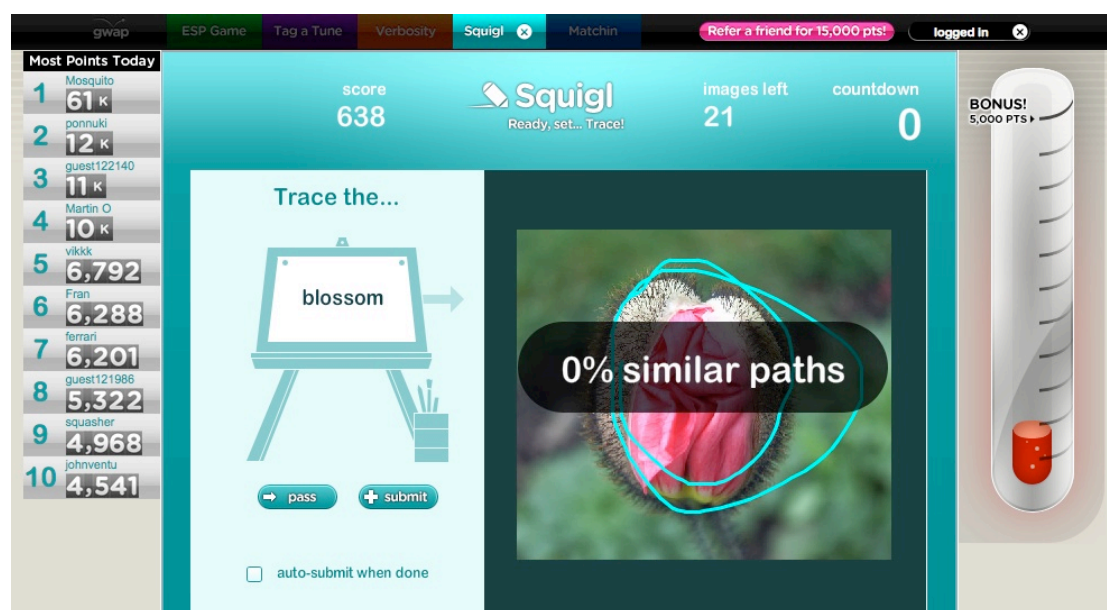


Figure 3.1 – A screen example of the game Squigl

On GWAP website ([www.gwap.com](http://www.gwap.com)) you have games like ESP, where two users try to find the word the other chose to tag a photo. This information is processed and linked to the image, making it easier to find it in search engines. The tags from ESP are then used on Squigl. The player gets an image with a word. He then has to trace it in the image. Doing that, he is marking the pixels of an object represented in an image. In Matchin, the players say which of two images is more appealing. Tag a Tune challenges players to describe songs. It adds a layer of information about songs that go deeper than just the name and the artist that composed it. Finally, there is Verbosity, a game of association of words that, again, will help artificial

intelligence computers on finding meaning and connections between groups of words.

The same trend brought other projects like Phrase Detectives ([anawiki.essex.ac.uk/phrasedetectives](http://anawiki.essex.ac.uk/phrasedetectives)), Fold It ([www.fold.it](http://www.fold.it)) and The Spectral Game ([www.spectralgame.com](http://www.spectralgame.com)). These concepts help us prove that it is possible to embed play in less-than-expected places. But media is a hard topic to tackle and turn into a game. A company called Impact Games ([www.impactgames.com](http://www.impactgames.com)) works with events that are in the news. Playing with them could, if done correctly, end up teaching people something about subjects like the proliferation of fast-food restaurants or the Israeli aerial attack on Gaza. One of their most popular titles is Peace Maker, which has garnered positive reviews in the specialized media. In this game, the player plays the role of either the Palestinian President or the Israeli Prime Minister, and has to try to bring peace to the Middle East.

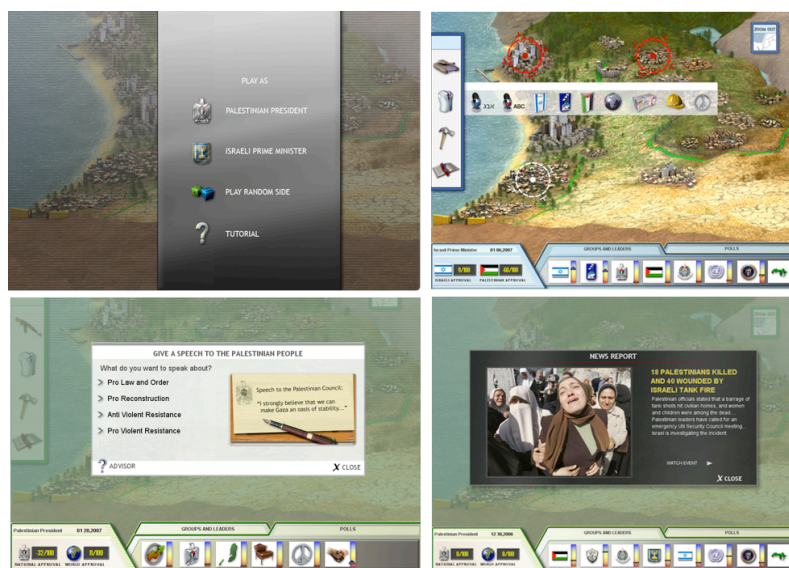


Figure 3.2 – Screens of the game Peace Maker

The trend extends to other subjects as the fight against diabetes and infections on hospitals. The repository of information about these games that

have the purpose of educating the player in some specific subject is the site Social Impact Games ([www.socialimpactgames.com](http://www.socialimpactgames.com)).

Even unexpectedly, news stories can become a game. The TV show Fantástico, a weekly variety show with dramaturgy, humor sketches and journalism that airs every Sunday night in Brasil on TV Globo, ran a story about how a singer called Belchior, very popular in the 1970s, had vanished for months.

The arm of Globo's online journalism, G1, ran the story (originally produced for the TV show) in digital form. They transcribed part of the text from the video and it was online a few hours after it was seen on television.

Immediately, readers from every part of the country started to send information about Belchior sightings. They had photos, stories and dates. "We didn't expect that", says Renato Franzini, executive-editor of G1. "In the morning, we had many messages telling us about sightings of the singer. We decided to put it all together and make it a new story."

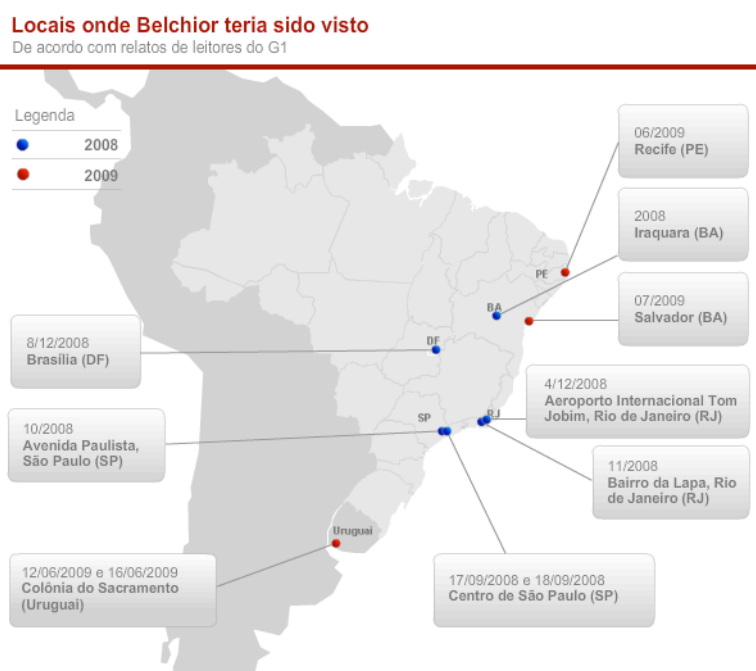


Figure 3.3 – The map with the sightings of the brazilian singer Belchior

The editorial team made a map where it is possible to pinpoint a sighting and the date Belchior was seen there. This is an example of a challenge that was established for the audience (find Belchior) even though nobody in the TV show or the website, asked for the help of the audience. It emerged naturally.

To see the original story, transcribed from Fantastico:

<http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Musica/0,,MUL1277595-7085,00-FAS+E+AMIGOS+COMENTAM+SUMICO+DO+COMPOSITOR+BELCHIOR.html>

The development the next day, with data collected from the readers:

<http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Musica/0,,MUL1278576-7085,00-LEITORES+DO+G+CONTAM+TER+VISTO+BELCHIOR+NO+URUGUAI+E+EM+VARIAS+PARTES+DO+BR.html>

### **3.5.2 - Not always a game**

But it is very important to clarify that the goal of the Media Manager is not to make games, although sometimes it will happen and will be the right thing to do. The goal is to add a layer of fun in media products. So it is important to think about pure fun, about the concept of toying.

A good example of how adding an interesting layer of fun comes from the new company Funky Lunch ([www.funkylunch.com](http://www.funkylunch.com)). They set up a website showing their creations and are gathering followers on Facebook and Twitter to have audience critical mass and release a book. So far, they are gathering a passionate group of people that now how hard it is to keep children not only eating healthy food but just eating regularly. There are layers for that trend. The first one is to create visually pleasurable food. We can look at the



nouvelle cuisine and how it inspired cooks from around the world to present their food. We can also look at how important it is to have a nice looking sandwich. It is always a plus. We like the beauty. Have in mind that design, order, beauty is not always playful.

This is pretty.



Figure 3.4 – Conventional food well presented

This is pretty, playful and fun.



Figure 3.5 – Food presented in a playful way

Having fun is something that comes from our social needs and expectations. It comes from the gathering of social capital and recognition from friends. This is part of the magic of social networks websites, as we will see when we talk further about social media.

It's curious to see how Microsoft used these concepts to build the Xbox Live community. It is the place the Xbox 360ers go when they are not playing. And there are plenty of things to do there. There are many promotions, videos, movies, tutorials and places to meet friends and look at their avatars and profiles. In there, the players can proudly show their achievements. These are badges that they get from every game they play and are shown in their profiles as trophies. So Microsoft made the Xbox Live community successful, with 20 millions users worldwide (retrieved from: <http://www.crunchgear.com/2009/05/28/xbox-360-sales-top-30-million-with-20-million-live-subscribers/>), with half of these people paying US\$50 for the Gold subscription (info retrieved from: <http://news.softpedia.com/news/Only-About-50-Of-Xbox-Live-Subscribers-Go-for-Gold-105251.shtml>). They are playing without playing. Touching in other needs and interests of their users and making them come back. The structure they adopted is so clever that every Media company should look at how it works. Why not give the audience badges? They could show to everyone how they are the most regular science readers of the community. The person that makes the best scores in the quizzes of a magazine could get a badge for that. And so on.

But from all of these examples of use of a Play Factor is incredibly strong in entertainment media. Henry Jenkins explains in *Convergence Culture* (2006), the power of fiction that invites the audience to play. In an article entitled *Rebel Alliance*, published in the magazine *Fast Company* of april 11, 2008, the writer David Kushner talks to a group of writers and produces that, at the time, were shaping some of the most complex and multi platform shows on american television: *Lost*, *Battlestar Galactica* and *Heroes*.

In five years, the co-creator of *Lost* Damon Lindelof tells to the magazine, "Instead of watching *Heroes* on NBC, you'll go to nbc.com and download the show to your device, and the show will be deleted as soon as you finish watching it -- unless you pay \$1.99; then you get audio commentary. You enhance it. It's like building your Transformer and putting little rocket ships on the side."

Cuse knows what he is talking about. He sided with J.J. Abrams to create *Lost*, then they rebooted *Star Trek* and in each of these projects they were dealing with rich mythologies.

When franchises expand over multiple platforms, they are not diluting the brand in any way, as the success of *Lost*, *Heroes* and *Battlestar Galactica* prove. As long as this expansion is planned and each movement follows a logical strategy. They are making the universe of the product bleed to the real world and, therefore, inviting the audience to play along. Understanding that video media, with the advent of the DVDs and DVRs can be seen differently. People are stopping, freezing frames, rewinding and forwarding the scenes. They are approaching video like people always approached literature. As something that you can go back and see in your time, not just as ephemeral media (Johnson, 2005). But in the end, it all goes back to the basic premise: the show needs to be good enough, since it is the flagship of the strategy. If it's rubbish. Nothing else will work.

### ***3.6 - The Play Factor framework***

We established that in an era of interactivity and a plethora of digital tools, products in general, but more specifically media products, will be stronger as long as their narratives evolve in the form of a conversation.

When researching for this project, it became clear that there was no unified view for this methodology. The Media Manager had to look at different branches to find guidance. Most of the time, the sources were Social Media books and most of them were making the same statements over and over.

With the Play Factor identified as an achievable actual goal, a whole other field, with a more evolved framework and theoretical basis, was available. Social Media sources are just a few years old. Books about game design with a modern digital approach start to appear in the 1980s. The concepts and frameworks evolved with the field.

What follows is a proposal and is not meant to be definitive. The field is evolving and the ways to embed the Play Factor will need to evolve in conjunction. To keep this concept up to date, the project has a blog ([www.theplayfactor.com](http://www.theplayfactor.com)) that will work as the repository of ideas, the evolution of the concept, evaluation of new sources and correction of mistakes.

### **3.6.1- PF19Q**

The questionnaire that a Media Manager has to answer is straightforward. It will force him to rethink some concepts and check if its product is on par with what is needed to not only have a Play Factor embedded, but contain a clear link with Social Media standards. This is the Play Factor Eighteen Questions Framework that will be abbreviated to PF19Q.

The ideas for this framework come from many sources. The most notable is the book *The Art of Game Design* by Jesse Schell. The author creates 100 questions that cover almost any field of gaming and, as he said in the interview for this paper, could be used in any media. "It was very important to me that people could understand that games are not a separate thing. These are rules for experience design in general. And these are rules for looking at any experience. And initially i didn't even call it a book about game design. The initial title was, i think, something like art of entertainment. But the publisher felt certain that we would do much better if we focused on game design. And i agreed. And in a sense i thought it was more provocative doing

it that way. Focusing on game design and then making it open”, said the the author in an interview for this dissertation.

The title of each questions are funny on purpose, to be aligned with the whole concept of the framework. That is why the questions have titles as “Are You Talking to Me?” or “To Toy or Not To Toy?”. If the goal is to make fun products, the objective is to make the process as serious as it has to be, and as light hearted as possible.

Another important consideration is that although it is clear that the Play Factor could be at work anywhere, the focus of this paper is to help a Media Manager in the task of using digital tools to embed the Factor in its media products. We are talking about mobile technologies, computers, PDAs and portable multimedia devices like the iPods and e-readers. It would be impossible to talk in the limited space of this dissertation about the use of the Play Factor in analogue spaces. However, the subject deserves to be examined in the weblog.

### **1. For Whom?**

Every product has a target. It is not about obvious marketing strategies (although they are relevant, no matter how eventually boring for who is not into marketing), but about knowing for whom this Media Product is being made. We are in the era of infinite nicheing, says *The Long Tail* (Anderson, 2007). So the first step is to have clear in mind who the product is for. A process like Stanford Research Institute’s NABC is a useful tool to help in this process.

The decision about who the product is made for will inform all the subsequent decisions. Demographics influence design and the vocabulary. Geography changes the reach of the subjects that will be explored. It goes on and on. These decisions are even influenced by laws about what can and can’t be said or used in some countries.

So, you need to answer these questions:

- How old is your audience?

- What sex?
- Where are they?
- What language do they speak?

## **2. What are the platforms?**

Look at the available alternatives of technological platforms. In a society in unquestionable technological transition, each age and social group has huge differences in terms of technological use. Look at the numbers. Who uses the high-end cell phones and will be able to use that application? Who reads Twitter? Who uses Facebook? Who is on TV (remember TV? There are local channels, very niche, with cheap time for hire)? What are the quirks of these platforms? For instance, most of the podcasts that people download for their iPods are 30 to 45 minutes long. It fits commuting or a car ride to work. Video podcasts can't be seen by driving commuters. These are all things to have in mind.

A good strategist is able to find the audience where the audience is, leaving the buzzwords for the gurus. In the most evolved countries, internet use is growing across the board, but even there, it is important to find the right websites. So a good research is really useful. Look at the numbers and follow the audience. Have these questions ready:

- What are the kinds of platforms my audience uses? TV, radio, magazines, newspapers, internet, mobile, e-reader?
- How do they use them?
- Where do they use them?
- How often?

## **3. Which tools are being used?**

Each platform has its specific applications and formats. The internet is very malleable in terms of available tools. They can be interactive, they can adapt to each audience. And since the internet is the tool of our time, it is easy to become self-indulgent and only think about digital strategies. But don't forget that the old media is far from dead, and it still has some cheap and useful

concepts to be used. You are at the third step. So, you know who is your audience and what platforms they use. Now chose the right tools inside the desired platforms. It is just very important to map the available tools and be aware of the most creative uses people are making of these platforms. Then, it is time to think about the kind of content you will develop for these tools and platforms.

- Which tools are available to the platforms you will work with?
- What are the most creative and effective uses others have made with these tools?
- Think for a moment. What did no one do with these tools until now?

#### **4. What do I want the audience experience to be?**

This is about what the Media Manager wants its audience to experience when in contact with the product in its various platforms. It will shape all the applications that will be developed in the platforms with any tools available. With the experience in mind, possible scenarios for the Play Factor start to shape. If the original product is a show like Lost, the experience of mystery will shape everything that is done for the franchise. If we are talking about a news show, it may be about enlightening or just about pure information or learning about the world. It will shape all the experiences the audience will have in other platforms and so on.

- What is the basic experience that you want your audience to have with the original concept of your product?
- What experiences could capture these feelings your audience have about the original product and expand them?

#### **5. On with the new**

People love to “eat” patterns and chunk then (Koster, 2004). Have in mind that surprising them with curve balls is important. Do the unexpected and they will notice you. If you are talking about a fictional product it is just about being able to give them something new in each platform and tool you chose. If it’s about news and stories and features, then all the better. They have to

surprise the audience anyway to be relevant. Novelty calls for attention.

Surprise is fun.

- What can I do that I have never done before?
- What are the surprising ways to use the platforms and tools available?

## **6. What is the audience looking for?**

The Media Manager can't lose sight of what the audience is looking for in their product. It is what is valuable to them and if it is not there, they will not come back. People go see Transformers because they want to see action, explosions, cool machines and Megan Fox. If the film doesn't give it to them, the product is not aligned with what the audience wants from it. The same thing happens with all the sub products of the experience of the original movie. Jesse Schell (2008) calls it endogenous value when it regards games. Expand it and extrapolate to other medias. What, in your experience, is valued by your audience? Give it to them.

- What you offer has any value for your audience?
- How can you make it more interesting to them?

## **7. Are you raising enough questions in their minds?**

Good content, at least for the modern audience, needs to be "rich". Make sure that the action raises the cognitive challenges for your audience. Steven Johnson talks about this in the book *Everything Bad is Good for You* (Johnson, 2005). Content that raises questions, that make the intellectual action happen on this side of the screen, are what people are interested in, more and more. There is no need of asking direct questions to the audience, but simply leaving something in the air, like the Belchior story in topic 3.5.1. There was a discreet question raised (where is Belchior) and the audience simply started to answer this question naturally.

- What challenges does the content raise to make the audience think?
- Are there problems that the audience could help solving?
- Are the product tools enabling a conversation, so that the audience can create new problems to be solved and ask new questions?



## **8. How do I look?**

Does the concept look good? Did the Manager give enough time to think about how the user interface? Does it all look as it should? One of the big mistakes of many media operations is to underestimate the value of design, interaction design and information architecture. These are elements that the audience sees first and that will give them a message about the product. Some of these elements, like information architecture, are also behind the scenes and keeping everything organized. And this will influence the outcome of the experience of the audience too.

- Is the way the product looks on track with the concept behind it?
- Does the design make the experience pleasurable?
- People know where to look and where to go?
- Does the audience know where they are?
- Is the visual project modular and capable of being exported to different platforms?

## **9. To toy or not to toy?**

Does the product have a narrative and a bleeding universe for the audience to play with? It isn't always possible to do that, but whenever it is, it's desirable to make a product that goes beyond and makes people want to play with it. Stop for a second and think about what you do and how can your audience experience your product in unexpected ways. If you give them the news, how could they help in giving news back? If they are seeing cars that turn into robots, how could they have one of their own? It is about being a playground and enabling the audience to have fun with it.

- Does the audience want to inhabit the conceptual space created by the product?
- Do your tools and platforms enable this experience?

## **10. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

In publicity and marketing, this discussion is very common, but in other

branches of communication studies people tend to forget about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It is important to map where in this hierarchy is the product. After that, it is possible to try to develop applications that fulfill other needs mapped in different platforms, through the tools available. For example, if people use the news to have subjects for conversation, it is useful to have a mobile service to deliver information to their cell phone and give them something to talk about from time to time. Or, if they want new puzzles to crack, give them questions to feed their need. And so on.

- On which levels of the Hierarchy is the product operating?
- Is it possible to expand on this basis?
- How do the tools and platforms connect with the needs the product is trying to fulfill?

### **11. Are You Talking to Me?**

If the goal is to put the products in synch with the Social Media standards, it is absolutely crucial that it enables conversation (Safko and Brake, 2009).

Interactivity is key and the audience needs to feel that their contributions are relevant to any outcomes that will influence the future of the product. The Media Manager must check if all the decisions are pointing to an interactive product.

- The tools and the platforms chosen are enabling a conversation between the audience and whoever makes the product?
- Is the product generating enough reasons for the audience to interact?
- Does their actions have any influence in the outcomes?

### **12. We Are the World**

Is the product generating a community? If not, there is something wrong and some of the steps were not taken properly. It is very important that the audience has the chance, the space and enough reasons to connect. The content has to give them reasons to talk to each other and to whoever is creating the product. As Clay Shirky states in *Here Comes Everybody* (2008), media products have always been about forming communities. The digital

tools and platforms turn these communities visible and enable this connection. A healthy community will naturally have fun and create play within itself. The love and interest of these communities for the content is what will make the product relevant. Or not.

- Is the product really connecting with the needs of the audience? (Note: look at item 10 to clarify)
- Are your tools adequate to keep the community connected?
- The product is generating interesting subjects for the community to talk about?

### **13. Show me the Money**

It is not about money (at least most of the time), but about the reward, the payoff. If people are interacting with the product, there is a clear need for rewards. It can be anything; Xbox Live managers use a clever system of badges and incentives to keep people interested. If the community does something, the results of that action have to appear somewhere. If they are ignored, the social game is disrupted and there is no fun. Rewards have to be in the mix of any contemporary product.

- Is the community being rewarded for their loyalty or interest?
- Are the rewards interesting enough?

### **14. You Shall Not...**

Any community has boundaries. Limits are not bad if they are reasonable, and people perceive that they are there for the greater good of the group.

Communities can be moderated by someone from the company, or by the community itself. But the rules need to be clear and fair. Giving limits will give people something to talk and to think about. And it will give the community a safe environment. Finding the balance between too much and too little is key.

- Does the community have sensible rules of behavior?
- Are the rules fair?
- The rules are being applied?
- The rules are being respected?

- The punishment for whatever mistake is fair?

### **15. Once Upon a Time...**

Every media product should look for narrative. It can be a big one, or many smaller pieces. But there is a logic and a story that will engage the audience. It can be connected to how the branding strategy developed. It is easy to engage people around the narrative of a fictional media product like the series *Lost*. But let's say that the product is a radio station with focus on classic music. There is a cause for keeping classic music alive that needs to be the focus of the products developed by the station. It becomes an ongoing narrative that will gather fans of the theme. It is about finding the focus, gathering the right audience and then directing the efforts towards a clear goal.

- Does the product theme has an ongoing narrative/
- Does this narrative evolve through time?
- If the current narrative is getting to an ending point, is there a new one to be adopted?

### **16. Me, Me, Me**

Does the individuals in the community have avatars? It's not about forming the 100th social network that nobody will care about. It is about integrating your community with whatever popular social network is strong in your environment and getting to know the audience more (Safko and Brake, 2009). In Brazil, Orkut gathers 95% of citizens with a connection (information retrieved from <http://adwords-br.blogspot.com/2009/08/novo-estudo-as-redes-sociais-no-brasil.html>). There is a need to integrate the media products with established social networks and develop applications that will take advantage of the Social Currency gathered around the media product in question. It is about finding way to touch the need of people for social recognition and giving them something to show to their peers. Connecting with the audience inside social networks like Orkut, Hi5 or Facebook will make it easier to develop applications with legitimate Play Factor capabilities.

- Does the Media Manager make good en oughuse of the existing social networks in order to know his audience?
- Is the information gathered used to make the product better and more connected to the audience?

### **17. Friends and Opponents**

Is there an adequate balance of competition and friendship in the community? When there is social currency around, the alliances will form naturally. People will compete for badges, trophies and any other kind of status symbols that will give them more visibility or simply make them proud. In this process, they will form alliances and groups of interest.

- Does the community have enough social currency components (rewards, symbols of status, trophies) to keep them interested?
- Does it make the movements and actions inside the community healthy (without fights and disputes)?

### **18. Always Looking Ahead**

If there is a community around a product, it is good to have a plan to help this community to evolve. Communities have a life cycle. It starts with visitors (and can be lurkers, visitors that only look and don't give anything back to the community, or trolls, the vandals of the communities). When they get used to the rituals of the community, they become novices and are active in the dialogues. After some more time, they become regulars and, if they develop some social power, become leaders. The ones who, at some point, feel tired and leave are called elders (Safko and Brake, 2009). It is important to monitor the group to see if people are constantly evolving in the community that surround the product, and if it has something resembling these phases. And the Media Manager needs to work to feed the community with enough challenges and rewards so that there is fuel for social currency.

- Is the audience progressing and evolving towards something, or are they leaving the community too soon?
- Is there content for each phase and style?

- Is there social currency to feed these cycles?

### **19. How Much is Too Much?**

The last question is absolutely relevant, but was left for the end with a purpose. First, the Manager needs to have the most interesting and innovative ideas. Then it's time to think if it's doable and cost effective inside the limits of a budget.

Is the cost right?

Does the investment have any chance to pay off?

Could it all be done for less? And even less than that?

These 19 questions have the objective of helping the development of a media product, its expansion through multiple platforms and the development of a metacontent with the goal of helping the audience have fun.

## **4. PRESENTATION**

In this section, some relevant websites are used as examples of the Play Factor in action. The New York Times is then more closely analyzed, with the help of Aron Pilhofer, the man that was the leader of the change in the newspaper's philosophy over the last two years.

### ***4.1 - The Play Factor at work***

Some of the most successful or innovative companies of the last few years have the Play Factor embedded in them. Let's have a look at what they do and try to target it in them.

#### **4.1.1 - eBay**

[www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com)

The company was created as an auction website in 1995. The process surrounding it is pretty simple. People put something to sell and wait for bids. On the other side, people interested in the product try to outbid their competitors but still buy the product for the lowest possible price. In this process, there are rules, a ritual, a goal, a pay-off. To keep people's money safe, the community around eBay follows many rules. Sellers have badges that show how many products they have sold and how people feel about their interactions.

To buy a product, there is strategy involved. Many people wait for the best moment to bid and try to get the products for the lowest price. On the other side, some sellers try to offer cheap products in quantity in order to raise their selling statistics and look better in the community. Another site called Telebid (now Swoopo) added even more game mechanics to this concept. People buy tokens that give them the right to bid for products. The auctions have a deadline and people tend to use their bids at the last second. The trick is, when you bid, you extend the auction for a certain amount of time, making it possible for other person to bid and beat you. The Washington Post explained how it is possible to make a lot of money with that mechanic:

“(...) on Swoopo you pay 60 cents each time you make a bid.”

Sixty cents? Sure doesn't sound like much when a \$1,000-plus camera or computer is at stake. But consider the MacBook Pro that Swoopo sold recently for \$35.86. Swoopo lists its suggested retail price at \$1,799. But then look at what the bidding fee does. For each "bid," the price of the computer goes up by a penny, and Swoopo collects 60 cents. To get up to \$35.86, it takes a stunning 3,585 bids -- and Swoopo gets its fee for each. That means that before selling this computer, Swoopo took in \$2,151 in bidding fees.

Yikes.

In essence, what your 60-cent bidding fee gets you at Swoopo is a ticket to a lottery, with a chance to get a high-end item at a ridiculously low price. With each bid, the auction is extended for a few seconds to keep it going as long as someone in the world is willing to take just one more shot. This can go on for a very, very long time. The winner of the MacBook Pro auction bid more than 750 times, accumulating \$469.80 in fees.”

(retrieved on July 25, 2009, from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/11/AR2009071100684.html?hpid=sec-tech>)

#### **4.1.2 - Facebook and LinkedIn**

[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

[www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)

The social networks quickly became a popularity contest, with people collecting friends and tokens of groups. Facebook opened the platform for the creation of applications and became the enabler of the hit-or-miss attempts of other websites to gain a desperately needed boost in traffic from a stream of Facebook users.

LinkedIn used game features to keep people adding information for their profiles. A progress bar shows that the profile is, for example, 35% filled. And a message tells the user how to get a few more points towards the 100% completion.



### 4.1.3 - Google Maps

**maps.google.com**

Locating photos and videos became a common game for the users of Google Maps. The creation of Google Earth pushed the play further, with the addition of features like a flight simulator and the ability to travel through space and visit Mars. But the possibility to add layers of information to the maps or to simply virtually visit a foreign city with something that looks like an interface from Blade Runner made Google Maps possibly the most playable of all non-game products.

### 4.1.4 - Amazon

**www.amazon.com**

It started selling books and year on year the number of items grew. But what made the difference with Amazon was that it turned browsing for books online into a pleasurable and a social experience. It imitated and improved on the type of experience that had bricks and mortar shops still excelled in. People like to write reviews and give grades to products. The system of recommendations based in the user tastes is another way to get to know new products. And it goes on and on.

The openness of the platform made it possible to make humor like this review of a Bic pen by R. Clark "lexingtonguy":

“Since taking delivery of my pen I have been very happy with the quality of ink deposition on the various types of paper that I have used. On the first day when I excitedly unwrapped my pen (thanks for the high quality packaging Amazon!) I just couldn't contain my excitement and went around finding things to write on, like the shopping list on the notice board in our kitchen, the Post-it notes next to the phone, and on my favorite lined A4 pad at the side of my desk.”

(retrieved on 10/07/2009 from: [http://www.amazon.com/Cristal-Ballpoint-Barrel-Pocket-BICMS11BK/product-reviews/B00006IE6X/ref=dp\\_top\\_cm\\_cr\\_acr\\_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1](http://www.amazon.com/Cristal-Ballpoint-Barrel-Pocket-BICMS11BK/product-reviews/B00006IE6X/ref=dp_top_cm_cr_acr_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1))

At the same time, the users made Eletronic Arts know that they hated the DRM system used in the game Spore, by rating it one star 2,666 times out of the 3,295 reviews

(retrieved on 10/07/2009 from: [http://www.amazon.com/Spore-Pc/product-reviews/B000FKBCX4/ref=dp\\_top\\_cm\\_cr\\_acr\\_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1](http://www.amazon.com/Spore-Pc/product-reviews/B000FKBCX4/ref=dp_top_cm_cr_acr_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1)).

Amazon turned the act of shopping into a pleasurable experience, building a community and adding social currency in the mix, and allowing the users to grade the most useful reviews and reward the reviewers.

#### 4.2 Case Study: The New York Times is not playing. Really?

The journalist Aron Pilhofer and the designer Matt Ericson went to a meeting in August of 2007 and came out with the mission of reinventing The New York Times for the Social Media landscape. In the two years since the ten-person team started working on the newsroom of the NYT, some of their features and decisions have made a distinct impact.

They were given the mission after launching some incredibly complicated and clever features the year before. The first one was an interactive map of the two new galleries of the Metropolitan Museum, and the other was called Faces of the Dead. The latter used a data base provides by the Defense Department of the United States. It showed a photograph of each of the 3000 soldiers that died on Iraq since the beginning of the war. When the user clicked in a dot in the photo, another person appeared and the whole mosaic changed for the new photo. It had a silent invitation to click. More important, it showed that the digital realm gave the newspaper the power to tell stories in novel ways.



Figure 4.1 – A screen of the feature Faces of the Dead

After Pilhofer's new team started working, the company took down the subscription wall, which was limiting the traffic to the site and making the New

York Times less relevant for a whole generation of users. The new strategy was to monetize the traffic through banners and AdSense links.

In 2008, the team launched a stream of videos, blogs and other online features that showed to the world that the New York Times had finally arrived in the new media landscape. On election day, with people deciding if their next president would be Barack Obama or John McCain, they put an invitation on the home page of the newspaper asking the readers to tell what word described what they were feeling that day. The result was a cloud of words. It didn't have scientific importance, but had a grandiose feeling.



Figure 4.2 – The Word Train, the feature of election day 2008

When invited to talk about his work on The New York Times for this dissertation, Pilhofer, currently the editor of Interactive News Technologies of The NYT, received a message with the description of what was the research about. His first answer was that he could talk, of course, but that he didn't know anything about game design.

According to Pilhofer, the biggest reason behind the creation of the new interactive features is the fact that his team is really inside the newsroom of the newspaper. Geography matters. The team doesn't have reporters. Instead, it is formed by programmers and designers. But all of them have the profile of a media junkie. "They need to have a journalistic sensibility and

understand that what we do is journalism. We are not building things for the sake of building things. We need to tell stories”, explains Pilhofer.

The team discovered very early on that an information architect was crucial to the work that had to be done in terms of rethinking the way the pages, the information and the links were organized. “Unlike print, you have a nanosecond to grab the reader’s attention or they will click away. And if you can’t grab that user right away and you can’t lead them through the story you are telling. It is really hard to get people to read things and stay in any website.”

The same way that photographers became photojournalists with the evolution of journalism in the 20th century, designers are becoming “design-alists”. They have a huge contribution to give to media companies in a digital era. “Design is crucial and underestimated in media companies everywhere. Just click around. They pay no attention to design. To a lot of people, design is only a shell. They don’t understand why their page views are going down”, says Pilhofer.

The work of the team varies for different projects. But they are not really used when breaking news happen. The assignments normally vary from one week to two months to develop a new feature. And they also develop tools that can be used by the editorial team in the day-to-day basis. Pilhofer defines his team: “We are a startup inside the newsroom. Our business is to look at the stories that the New York Times is telling and think about creative and interesting ways to help them tell those stories”.

The last feature in the long line of innovative concepts is the new feature: the Insight Lab. There, the newspaper asks it’s audience what they think of many things that are happening right now. Even though they don’t see it that way, the fact is that the biggest change in the New York Times, admit it or not, is that the Grey Lady came down to play with the crowd.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This research was born from the feeling that interactive technologies represent an opportunity for the traditional media to fulfill their full potential: if play and culture walk together (Huizinga, 1955) media should be able to be played in novel ways. It means that the media companies have the opportunity to move from a solitary (and authoritative) speech to a fully-fledged conversation with their audiences.

It obviously called for a broader definition of the word “play”. In a time when video games are a multimillion-dollar industry, capable of overcoming a worldwide recession, people still have mixed feelings about opening themselves to the idea of playing in spaces that are out of the ordinary and unexpected. The idea that play could now be embedded in many other activities needed to be proved through examples.

More than that, it needed to be proved that it was possible to embed “play” in media. So the biggest task was to find examples of practices that could prove that play was already embedded in some media products.

The task became an unconventional research. It was all about creative approaches to content and not about proving how useful embedding “play” in content could be. It was about showing and telling.

In the search for examples, there was always an intense questioning about the concept. Was it just a clever metaphor or a real fact of life? Could media really operate in that level and make the audience play?

And more than that, could the task of creating this kind of content be translated in a workable framework?

There is not a simple answer to all these questions.

First. The research proves that it is not just a clever metaphor. The Play Factor is not just, with no pun intended, a wordplay. It is a fact of life that media can raise questions and challenge and stimulate the audience cognitively. It can be richer and more intellectually interesting. It can teach something using these techniques.

The task is not easy, though. Create this kind of media require tasks that are not natural, therefore there are not professionals ready to do it. The need for a new breed of media, more interactive and cognitively challenging, ended up creating the figure of a designer-journalist. Someone that knows how to tell a story visually and that has the intellectual tools to make it work in higher levels, with more layers of information.

There are standards to be created and new concepts to be developed. There is an envelope to be pushed in terms of content and concepts to be explored.

It is especially hard because the techniques are all over the place and there are not enough qualified people able to cover all the possible threads. So there is a lot to be learned about social media that has to go beyond the buzzwords of the month.

There are contents more adaptable to the new reality and people tend to think that journalism, for example, is not able to follow this trend. The Belchior case from Brazil is just a good example of story that can be played with very simple tools.

This work was naturally multi platform and multimedia. But the essence was always to keep it fairly basic and the idea behind this was to state that it didn't need high technology to be achieved. The tools already exist as, again, the Belchior case prove. People sent messages through the night and the G1 reporters woke up monday with a story waiting to be told. Creating a map to help them tell that history was really easy. The repercussion on Twitter was

big and people kept thinking that the whole story was a viral to re launch Belchior's career.

Another conclusion is that the Play Factor is already being embedded in media products, but the efforts are solitary, with no available literature detailing how it was done and how can it be reproduced and able to evolve.

Although a TV show like Lost was a huge worldwide hit, the other projects that tried to reproduce the concept were not always successful. There were no standards established. A good counter-example is the show Heroes. After a successful first season the show crumbled with no multi platform product capable of really expand the universe of the original product. And worse, the original product was not doing well creatively.

The only person that seemed to really understand that the audience wanted to play was J.J. Abrams, the same man behind Lost. That was how he managed to make a low budget movie called Cloverfield into a worldwide hit. Just a few months ago, Abrams released an issue of Wired completely dedicated to mystery. It is natural. People want to be challenged. But they also want to have closure. To see resolution and have a pay off, a reward for their efforts.

Through the last few years, while other newspapers submerged in debt and lost importance, The New York Times seemed to understand that something had to be done right to revert its dive into irrelevance. A team of digital creators started to change the company and put the NYT in the 21st century. Right now, the company runs against it's own debt and the lack of confidence of Wall Street in its capacity to get out of this situation. But there is no American newspaper more involved in the cause of resolving the economic issues with reinvention of the way of creating content.

With this in mind, a framework was needed. The final result is far from perfect and will, with the most absolute certainty, evolve through the next few years. It



will happen together with an evolving media landscape. New questions and technologies will appear and it will certainly influence the way content is created and produced. As more people are aware of the existence of a Play Factor, new applications and concepts will arise.

The framework is naturally far from perfect. It is just a beta version, the starting point. But is clearly achievable. In the era of the crowd sourcing, a complex concept must be released as soon as possible exactly because the crowd is welcome to help figuring out. This will be the goal of the blog.

The old media ended up outside the reach of this work, but newspapers, books and magazines, the paper based media that everyone insists on declaring dead, still has something to offer. First, it has a huge audience that is not going anywhere soon. And because it is an important (and entertaining) challenge to look for a solution for what seems to be a problem with no way out: the fate of conventional paper media.

To conclude, there is no doubt that the Play Factor will appear more and more in the media and that it will be consciously incorporated into various situations. Some of them will be a lot of fun. Some other will just annoy whoever fight for ethics on content. The Play Factor is a constant, a part of culture, a concept that just exists. And like anything that is part of nature, it's not bad nor good. It's just there.

## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, C. (2006) *The Long Tail: How Endless Choice is Creating Unlimited Demand*, Random House Business.
- Berne, E. (1964) *Games People Play*. Penguin. London.
- Brown, J.S., Duguid, P. (2000/2002) *Social Life of Information, The*. Harvard Business School Publishing.
- Crawford, C (2003) *Cris Crawford on Game Design*. New Riders Games
- Crawford, C (2005) *Chris Crawford on Interactive Storytelling*. New Riders.
- Huizinga, J. (1955) *Homo Ludens*. Routledge (2009)
- Jenkins, H. (2006) *Convergence Culture*. New York University Press. New York.
- Johnson, S. (2005) *Everything Bad Is Good For You*. Penguin. London.
- Johnson, S. (1997) *Interface Culture*. Harper Collins. San Francisco.
- Johnson, S (2004) *Mind Wide Open*. Scribner.
- Jull, J. (2005) *Half-Real – Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*. The MIT Press.
- Koster, R. (2005) *Theory of Fun on Game Design*. Paraglyph Press. Arizona.
- Manovich, Lev. (2001) *Language of New Media, The*. The MIT Press.
- Maslow, A.H. (1943) *Theory of Human Motivation*, A. *Psychological Review* 50(4):370-96.
- Miller, George A. (1956) *The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our Capacity for Processing Information*. *The Psychological Review*, 1956, vol. 63, pp. 81-97
- Moggridge, B. (2007) *Designing Interactions*. The MIT Press.

O'Reilly, T. (2007) What Is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software. COMMUNICATIONS & STRATEGIES, no. 65. 17-37.

Pellis, S., Pellis, V. (2009) Playful Brain, The. Oneworld Publications. Oxford.

Portes, A. (1998) SOCIAL CAPITAL: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology. Annu. Rev. Sociol. 1998. 24:1-24

PWC (2008) The Medium is the Message. Price Waterhouse Coopers

Safko, L., Brake, D. (2009) Social Media Bible, The. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Salen, K., Zimmerman, E. (2004) Rules of Play. MIT Press.

Schell, J. (2008) Art of Game Design, The. Morgan Kaufmann.

Shirky, C. (2008) Here Comes Everybody. Penguin Books. London.

Surowiecki, J. (2004) Wisdom of the Crowds, The. Abacus.

Szulborski, D. (2005) This Is Not a Game – A Guide to Alternate Reality Gaming. New Fiction Publishing.

### **Articles:**

*The New Journalism: Goosing the Gray Lady, retrieved from:*

<http://nymag.com/news/features/all-new/53344/>

Rebel Alliance, retrieved from:

<http://www.fastcompany.com/node/798975/print>

Word Train

[http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2008/11/04/us/politics/20081104\\_ELECTION\\_WORDTRAIN.html](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2008/11/04/us/politics/20081104_ELECTION_WORDTRAIN.html)

Faces of the Dead

[http://www.nytimes.com/ref/us/20061228\\_3000FACES\\_TAB1.html](http://www.nytimes.com/ref/us/20061228_3000FACES_TAB1.html)

## 7. APPENDICES

### ***7.1 – Interview with Aron Pilhofer , editor of Interactive News Technologies of The New York Times***

#### **Who are the professionals in your team?**

Aron Pilhofer: We wanted individuals who were extraordinarily good programmers, of course, but also people who had at least some journalistic background. Or some journalism sensibility. They need to understand that what we do is journalism, we are not building thing for the sake of building things. We are telling stories. We have embedded in our group an Information Designer. I had no idea what an Information Designer was before I worked in digital. And I looked at them and thought: this person doesn't code, this person doesn't design. What does he do? And now, I can't live without them. Not just any information architect. This is a guy who is a news junkie anyway. He helps us tell the right story. Unlike print, you have a nanosecond to get somebody's attention, or they will click away. And if you can't lead them seamlessly through whatever story you are trying to tell, you will lose that reader. And it is really hard to get people to spend time inside the website. I think that if I were starting that team again, I mean, I didn't know then what I know now. I would emphasize flow, navigations. I know a lot more about these things now, than when I started.

#### **We need designers more than ever, but they are not the ones we are used to. They can't be generalist. What are the kinds of skills of these professionals?**

AP: My designers all came from media. One came from a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Another one came from Philadelphia Enquirer. The third one came from the Las Vegas Sun and he is probably the most traditional designer. He was a page designer, you know, print. We also work

very closely with the design team of the NYT. Design is crucial, and underestimated in media companies everywhere. Just click around. They pay no attention to design. To a lot of people, design is only a shell. They don't understand why their page views are going down"

**If you look at a newspaper from 100 years ago, you see that there is the future of the photographer, that developed into the photojournalist through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Now we have the designer going the same way.**

AP: I agree. The idea of the designer as journalist, the designer as a storyteller is now an integral part not only on the newspaper in print, but online. We have a graphic artist, Steve Duenes, that early on recognized the need of the graphics desk to expand it's role to the web. And he made the commitment to hire people with very specific skills. We have people specialized in 3D, in maps.

**When we look at other American newspapers, there is nothing like what the NYT is doing. Why it seems that only the NYT is reacting?**

AP: The NYT is certainly ahead of many if not most American news organizations in trying to re imagine how we will be in five years, ten years from now. The reason is that our chairman has utterly and completely, through force of will, made it known publicly, that that is our future. And we are going to do something that a lot of media companies are not doing and invest. At a time of shrinking resources, we are going to do the right thing and invest in the parts of the company, like digital, that will take us to the future. We are going to do the right thing and invest while everyone else is cutting. Other companies are just cutting, cutting not only the newsrooms but cutting online, which to me is like shooting yourself in the head. You might as well close up shop. We are certainly the biggest company that is really integrating online. Some companies say that they are integrating but what they really did was

move a couple of web producers to the newsroom. That is not integration. My team exists at the NYT exclusively because we have truly integrated. We have one budget. If you think about what my team represents is kind of extraordinary just for the politics of it. I report to the chief technology office. He created this team and he gave me ten positions. My team is nine, I am ten. We have one budget. If you have a separate company. Like the Washington Post that have Newsweek using the same team, that could never have happened.

It helped that the idea came from me and from the graphics editor. And there were two people from the software team that helped me put this proposal together. And the reaction has been tremendous. People may think: this is the NYT, editors and reporters are going to act badly, be dodgy. You could not be more wrong. And it's not our newsroom. Journalists now are starting to get it. They want to do cool things. Push the boundaries. But there's no technology to support it. [Out of the NYT] They don't have a development team like mine, a graphics desk that gets it. And sometimes even worse than that. They have a system, a CMS, to put stuff out, and anything other than that is too hard, there is no money. You can't ever go beyond that. Nothing ever happens. I can't tell you how many of my friends are tech savvy and they don't have access to that stuff.

### **How did the team evolved?**

AP: We started with three people plus me. We looked for journalists for these positions. I may know some journalists that could enough code to be dangerous, but I needed real coders. We ended up hiring programmers with a journalistic sensibility. They are news junkies, they want to make a difference. They have to have a desire to work in this crazy environment. It is not a normal technology company. There is always something to do until five thirty. And I have to admit that it was kinda easy to find these people. There is a lot of people who wants to do that.

**How are your deliverables? Do you have a quota of videos per week, for example?**

AP: We usually do a mix of projects. We tend to do more medium term (a few days and a week) and long term projects (a month), than breaking news. Breaking news doesn't suit our strengths. We build tools to help. We built tools to help. Publishing tools.

**You guys are really developing software? You are a web company inside the NYT?**

AP: The way I describe it to people is that we have a startup inside the New York Times. Imagine that you create a startup, you put a bunch of developers together and as your raw material is everything that the NYT develops or acquire. What can you do with that?

## ***7.2 – Interview with Jesse Schell, author of *The Art of Game Design****

**Do you think that any experience could be “gamefied”?**

Jesse Schell: Yes. But I think that what you have to do is look at what the experience already holds. And you have to think about the reward system that it already contains. Every games has goals and challenges. That is really where the hook is. If you have other types of experiences that are not explicit games, but if they have goals and challenges then you can play out those aspects of it. An figure out how can you improve the nature of the challenges.

**Do you think that Social Media is a “gamefied” environment?**

JS: I don't know if I understand social media yet. It is a thing that is still evolving. But anytime you have media that is interactive, it starts to lend itself

towards game structures. If you want it to be a rewarding experience, Game Structures end up helping it. A really good example is LinkedIn. It has a progress bar that shows how complete your registrations is. When you first sign in to an account, you are 35% complete. If you put some more information, you get to 50%. And showing that really bothers people. They want to have the bar a 100% complete.

### **How could a newspaper embed this game structures?**

JS: It comes back to goals and challenges. You need to understand the goals of who reads the newspapers. Newspapers have a non trivial path, because they serve many audiences. They tend to break it down to specific psychographics. So they must track the guy that only reads sports, the other that goes right to the opinions page. And it goes on and on. You have to start by understanding that. And when you do it, you have to think about what they find rewarding and think how you could make it more rewarding.

### **One of the curious things about the book is that the proposed lens look like they could be used for other medias, not only games. Did you do it on purpose?**

JS: It was very important to me that people could understand that games are not a separate thing. These are rules for experience design in general. And these are rules for looking at any experience. And initially i didn't even call it a book about game design. The initial title was, i think, something like art of entertainment. But the publisher felt certain that we would do much better if we focused on game design. And i agreed. And in a sense i thought it was more provocative doing it that way. Focusing on game design and then making it open.