



WHAT MAKES PEOPLE BUY DLC?

10 TIPS FOR PLAYER RETENTION

WITHOUT PULLING A CAPCOM ON FANS

WHAT KIND OF DLC MAKES PEOPLE BUY?

You've probably heard a lot of tips, tricks and tactics about how to **improve user retention** in games. But you're not sure what works and what doesn't.

The fact that some DLC make people want to literally throw money at you **is not random**. There are reasons why this happens, and why other DLC gets all the hate. Now, I'm going to show you why people keep playing games with DLC and **how to avoid DLC hate**.

© Ubisoft - Assassins Creed III "Tyranny of King Washington"



GAMEDONIA - Game Backend



Speaking of hate, do you remember what happened when CAPCOM released Street Fighter X Tekken? If you don't, let me tell you it wasn't pretty for the developer. Loyal fans were outraged by a set of characters sold as DLC. **What's wrong with that?** The content was already in the disc, and it disgusted the community despite CAPCOM's efforts to explain the reasons behind this bold move.

Sometimes, just having good intentions might not cut it for raving fans.

Which brings me to the first of the

10 TIPS TO KEEP PEOPLE PLAYING YOUR GAME



TIP #1

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Not all people playing games know about how game development actually works. For most, DLC is just another way to **squeeze money off them**, and not a production solution so developers aren't forced to sit idle for long.

© Capcom - Street Fighter



Some very vocal **players rage** against developers that use the disc, or application, to store future DLC. It's **very hard** to fight against the notion that people are entitled to all the content in a disc (or app) whether it's encrypted or not.



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Consciously excluding core aspects that **are essential** for a full game experience is doing you a disservice. Players will perceive this as an unfair tactic to earn extra profit. Selling core gameplay as DLC is **not a smart move**.

© THQ - MX Vs. ATV Alive



© THQ - MX Vs. ATV Alive game is a notable example of this. The company CEO Brian Farrell argued that by lowering the initial purchase price to \$39.99 would draw a larger base of players that would then buy DLC to extend the experience. This didn't quite go as planned. The initial product **didn't offer enough value**, so the game sold poorly due to a flawed DLC plan.



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Getting more content such as powerful gear for game characters can enhance the experience, but it can ruin it too. Finding the right balance between **more strength and fair gameplay** might be a real challenge.

© Wargaming - World of Tanks



World of Tanks' developer Wargaming said: "*The more you pay, the greater your advantage over other players. Top-players end up never losing, while those who pay less or don't pay grow dissatisfied with the game. Eventually, many leave entirely and the overall player base shrinks.*"



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For players to enjoy new content, it has to represent a meaningful addition to the game. In case of games with **seasonal releases**, like in sports franchises, making DLC for them won't likely result in an enough attractive proposition.



EA tried selling in DLC format what had previously been a standalone game. For the first time UEFA Euro 2012 was released as DLC for FIFA 12, which was received with skepticism by fans. Later titles offered Goal Celebration DLC, demonstrating a change in their DLC plans.



TIP #5

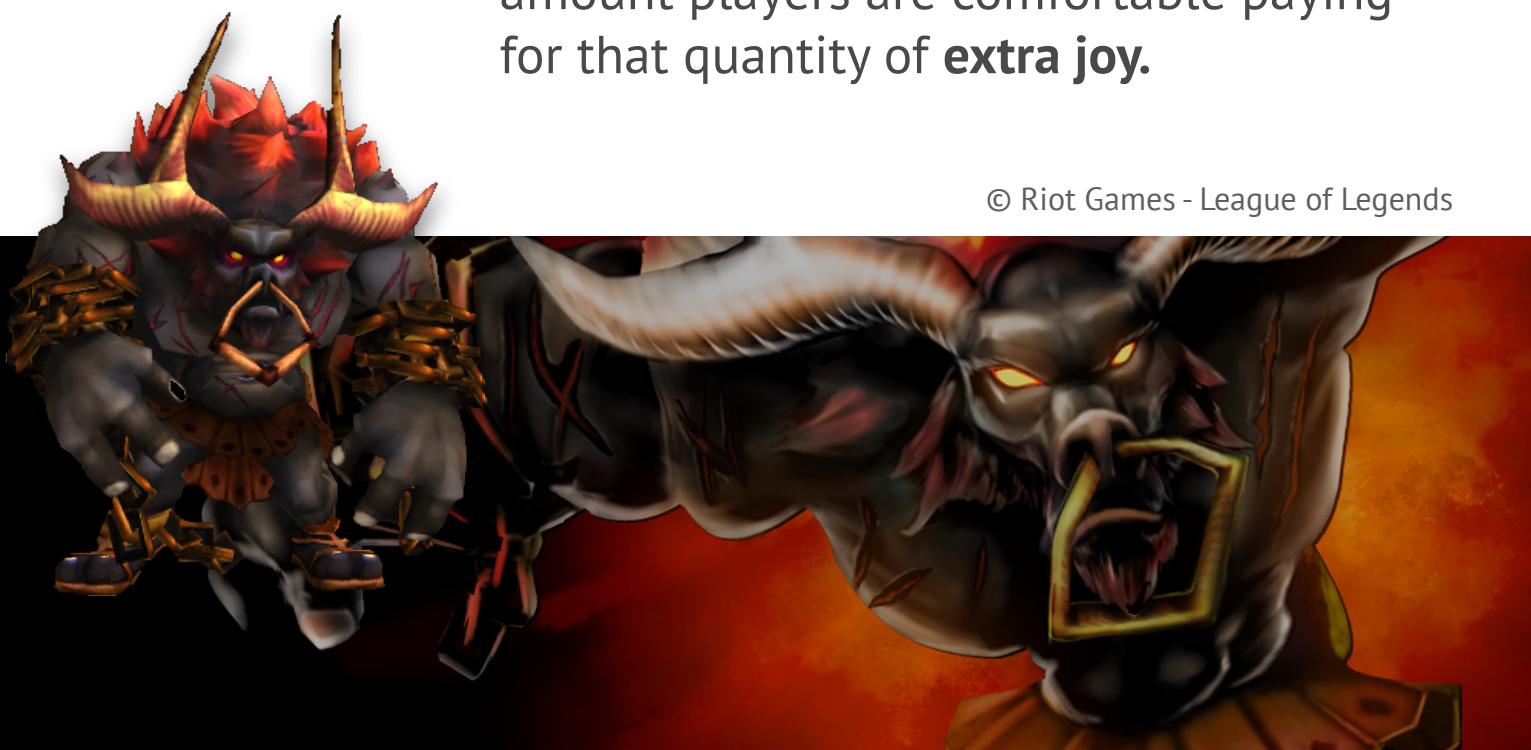
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DLC for video games don't have a standard pricing. It ranges from completely **free** to... whatever you think is fair. That's the key, charging the exact amount players are comfortable paying for that quantity of **extra joy**.

© Riot Games - League of Legends



What **value** do cosmetic items add to the experience? Setting a price to these is hard. True fans that want to show their status in the game may feel spending in items that make them stand out are a worthy investment. Value doesn't have to always be related to gameplay, it can also have a **social aspect**. Ask around prices for rare League of Legends skins, such as Black Alistar or PAX TF.



TIP #6

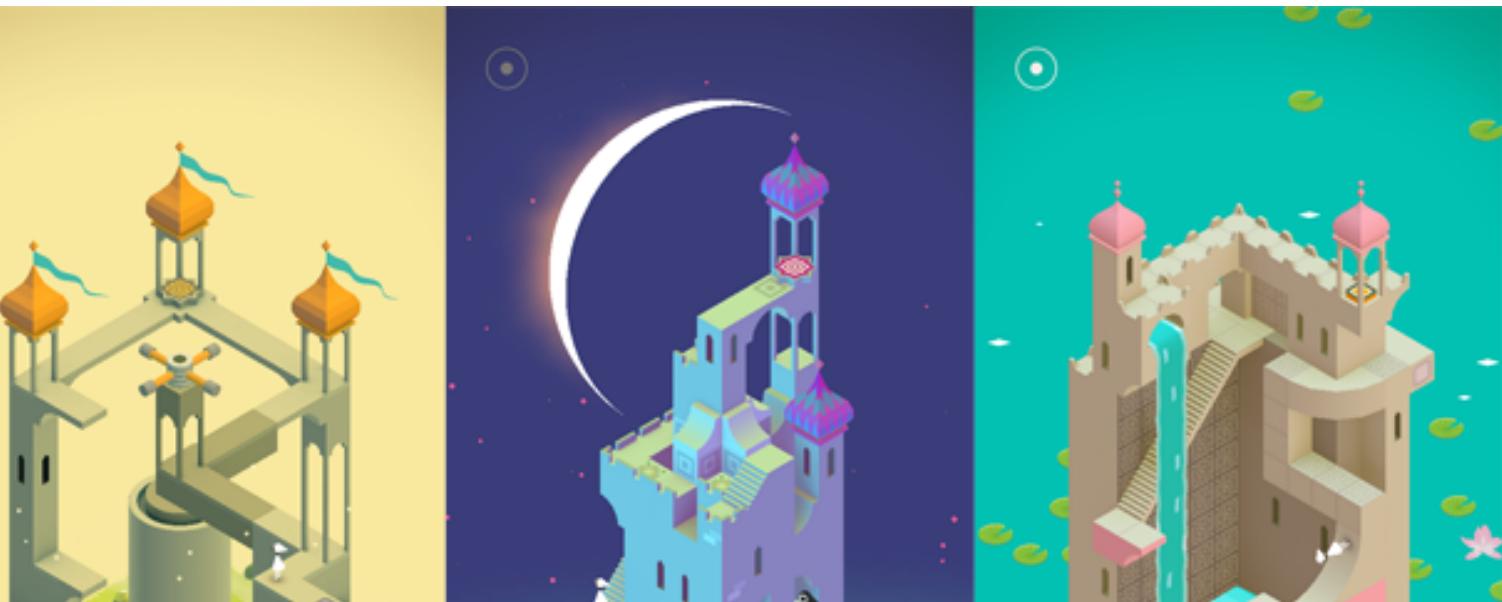
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DLC should give players more content of the kind they enjoy the most. Gathering **community feedback** and **game data** is essential to gauge what's best for the player base. Maximize the coolest and balance the meanest with DLC.

© USTWO - Monument Valley



Mobile hit Monument Valley received a DLC expansion of eight new levels even after developers said the game was released as a complete self-enclosed experience. **Fans longed for more, and ustwo delivered.** The new content adds more complex scenarios and expands the joy.



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Players need to feel compelled to buy. DLC has to **clearly communicate the value** it brings to a game that should already be offering a full experience. Produce fresh and enjoyable **new gameplay** that adds to the original.

© NINTENDO - New Super Mario Bros 2



As Chris Carter commented on the \$2.5 DLC for New Super Mario Bros. 2: “*All the DLC released so far is not a huge chunk of the game, so you’re not going to feel like you’ve missed out on crucial content if you don’t pick it up. The real question is if it’s worth your hard earned cash. Although it’s super easy and not really possible to fail, that doesn’t mean it isn’t fun. In fact, this pack is damn fun!*”



TIP #8

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It's your best shot at getting it into the most hands possible. What a surprise, huh? If you make attractive enough content, it's a great way to affect the amount of **concurrent players**, and have a **longer lasting effect**.

© BUNGIE - Destiny



Bungie announced that even non-buyers of Destiny's first expansion The Dark Below will get free DLC. Rewarding player loyalty with new content is cool, but it also can be a marketing strategy to lure people into purchasing the DLC expansion or **getting players that didn't play anymore back to the game**.



TIP #9

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Allow **more hours of gameplay** directly adding loads of new content that expands the game. Another cool way is to shift the approach a player must adopt to beat the game, with a new character or by changing the rules.



© BETHESDA - Skyrim, Dragonborn



Dragonborn was the first DLC expansion for The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim. It added loads of new content in form of characters, stories, settings, weapons, armors, and ingredients. **All for just \$20!** The fact that it added at least 15 hours of gameplay to the original title is a good reason why it **was successful**.



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The kind of DLC that works will depend from genre to genre. A multiplayer FPS requires different content than a single player infinite-runner. Besides, DLC usually **affects longevity more in single player than multiplayer games.**

© Relic - Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine



Is your game a multiplayer FPS? Add game modes that weren't in the original game such as Capture & Control or Exterminatus. **Party game? Add new mini-games.** New questions or themes are in order for trivia games. Guitar Hero kind of game? Everybody's got a favorite song, so hit the right note.

TO RECAP, TO IMPROVE PLAYER RETENTION,



YOU SHOULD **AVOID**

DLC that **is disc locked**.

DLC that **leaves out needed gameplay**.

DLC that **transforms games into pay-to-win**.

DLC that **is redundant**.

DLC that **feels too expensive**.

AND **EMBRACE**



DLC that **expands what they love**.

DLC that **feels worth the buy**.

DLC that **is free**.

DLC that **adds new features or a lot of content to play through**.

DLC that **is genre specific**.





HERE'S A BONUS TIP:

PEOPLE PLAY BECAUSE OF
COOL GAMEPLAY,
AND PEOPLE REPEAT WHEN
SHOWN RESPECT.



David Xicota - Gamedonia CEO

LET ME ASK YOU,

So, what downloadable content do you plan on using in your game?



What is Gamedonia? Gamedonia makes a complete Game Backend as a Service solution, equipping developers with gameplay modules, and safe cloud infrastructure to build mobile games from the start with the engines they want.

