

The Grand Theft of Rockstar Games

Muhammad Umar, Srikanth Mogadati, Priyanshu Tomar

New York Institute of Technology

MGMT 706

Dr. Prabhakar Gantasala

December 4, 2023

Rockstar Games

In the late 1990s, video games became extremely popular in society. Many companies have formed and released games and consoles, such as Nintendo, which released the Game Boy and Super NES, and Sony, who made the PlayStation. Towards the end of the 90s, Rockstar Games was established. Rockstar Games is a video game publisher, making popular titles such as Red Dead Redemption, Bully, L.A. Noire, and arguably their most popular game series, Grand Theft Auto. Currently, the net worth of Rockstar Games is almost 23 billion dollars, which makes it one of the largest video game publishers. They also sold 190 million copies of Grand Theft Auto V, making it the second most bought game of all time and one of three games that has sold over 100 million copies. As of today, Rockstar Games is still continuing to publish titles, including a new installment in their award winning series, Grand Theft Auto.

GTA VI Hack

In September 2022, “18-year-old Arion Kurtaj was “caught red handed” when the City of London Police searched his Travelodge hotel—where he was being held on bail after his March 2022 arrest for hacking chip manufacturer Nvidia—in the south-central England town of Bicester” (Winslow, 2023). According to reports, Kurtaj, a member of the hacker group Lapsus\$, was able to use an Amazon Fire Stick to access Rockstar Games’ Slack, a service that allowed collaboration using a cloud server. While the method of the hack has not been announced, it has been speculated that Kurtaj used the Fire Stick to access the internet, which he was unable to normally, and used it to access the cloud server. After accessing the Slack group, Kurtaj taunted the employees, announcing that he was an attacker, and downloaded all the files regarding GTA VI, the next title in development for the Grand Theft Auto series. Kurtaj then released

confidential information, including videos of the game itself, to the public, and threatened to release the entire source code to the public unless Rockstar Games contacted him on Telegram. Before he could leak anything else, he was caught, along with another member of the same group that assisted him.

Damage Done

The leaked content of GTA VI was devastating to Rockstar Games. In order to maximize interest in their latest title, they would only officially announce it near the release date to keep people talking about it. Since the game was leaked well over a year before it was announced, many people have seemed to be disinterested, as they already received confirmation of the existence of the game well before the company made a statement. This lack of excitement for the announcement can cause an adverse effect when the game is officially released.

Since videos of the unfinished game have been posted online, many people have been very critical, saying the game was the same as its previous installment. These comments about the game have had an overall negative tone, which can cause people to rethink about purchasing it when it comes out. This can cause a reduction in pre orders and sales in the first few days, since many people may want to wait to see if the game is worth purchasing after having negative thoughts about the leaked footage.

Rockstar Games had to contact many social media sites, such as Twitter and Youtube, and asked them to remove the copyrighted and confidential videos posted. Even though these companies worked with Rockstar Games to remove the leaked material, many users have already seen and saved it, and have uploaded the same videos months after the initial release. While

Rockstar Games has tried to limit the amount of users from witnessing the stolen media, they can never erase every single instance of it since there will be people who save and store it.

Strategies To Cope With these challenges

Faced with the challenges of unauthorized access and confidential information, Rockstar Company can develop several strategies to mitigate the impact and create company safeguard interests.

Implementing advanced cybersecurity measures is crucial to prevent unauthorized access to sensitive information. Rockstar Games should invest in robust cybersecurity protocols, including multi-factor authentication, regular security audits, and encryption technologies to build defense around their system. Human error is a common entry point for cyberattacks. Conducting regular training sessions for employees on cybersecurity best practices and the potential risks of social engineering attacks can help create a more security-conscious environment.

The breach occurred through Rockstar Company Slack channel, it is imperative to reassess and potentially enhance the security of collaboration platforms. Implementing end-to-end encryption and regularly updating access controls can enhance the protection of sensitive communications and files. Proactive monitoring of network activities can aid in the early detection of any suspicious behavior. Having a well-defined incident response plan in place ensures immediate and organized response to security incidents, reduces the potential for damage and makes it easier to manage quickly.

Rockstar Company should take legal action against the involved in the hacking incident. Law enforcement agencies can cooperate with international cybercrime teams to speed up the detection and apprehension of criminals.

Legal Ramifications

The GTA VI hack resulted in a significant breach of privacy and security, exposing sensitive data, game footage, source code, and other personal information by gaining administrative access to the entire network. This breach led to ransomware, blackmail, fraud, and sabotage, disrupting Rockstar's popularity, customer agreement, and financial performance.

Rockstar may face legal consequences for their actions after the hack, including customer complaints, fines, penalties, corrective actions, and cooperation with authorities. (For example) Sony settled a \$15 million lawsuit in 2014 after a data breach that compromised the personal records of 77 million PlayStation community customers.

Rockstar may also face investigations or sanctions from regulators or governments who found they violated their privacy or security laws or policies, such as the GDPR, CCPA, or FTC Act. They may pay fines, penalties, or implement corrective actions, such as improving data protection measures or notifying affected parties.

Rockstar may also face legal challenges from competitors or other parties who claim they infringed on their intellectual property rights due to the leak of its game images and source code. (For Example) In 2018, Microsoft sued Warner Bros and Behaviour Interactive for allegedly copying its game Fallout Shelter in their game Westworld.

Suggesting measures of Compliance for the Company

Rockstar Company is required to adhere to various laws and guidelines governing data privacy and safety, such as the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), CCPA (California Consumer Privacy Act), and FTC Act (The Federal Trade Commission), as well as government and industry recommendations and requirements. It must also fulfill contractor and fiduciary responsibilities with its clients, customers, partners, respecting their rights and expectations regarding data privacy and safety. Rockstar must also stick to ethical and social norms and values shared by the stakeholders and society, and act responsibly regarding data privacy and protection

The Company must also comply with laws and policies that protect intellectual property rights, such as TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights), and also follow the government or industry guidelines like the USPTO (United States Patent and Trademark Office). Rockstar must fulfill contractual and fiduciary duties with its costumes, users, partners, and contractors, acknowledging their rights and expectations regarding intellectual property rights. Additionally, Rockstar must stick to laws and guidelines that adjust the content and impact of its video games, such as ESRB (Entertainment Software Rating Board), PEGI (Pan-European Game Information), and comply with industry guidelines like the IGDA (International Game Developers Association). Rockstar is responsible for fulfilling their stakeholders rights and expectations regarding the content and impact of its games.

Ethical Concerns in the Gaming Industry:

The gaming industry, while a source of entertainment and innovation, is not immune to ethical challenges that warrant meticulous scrutiny. This report delineates several ethical issues prevalent in the gaming sector, emphasizing the imperative for a judicious balance between creative expression, responsible content creation, and the well-being of players, particularly those in vulnerable demographics.

1. Lack of Enforcement Against Underage Players:

This ethical quandary materializes when gaming entities neglect to rigorously enforce age restrictions on their products. Video games, delineated by age ratings, prescribe appropriateness for certain age groups. Permitting underage individuals access to games with mature content poses risks to their mental and emotional well-being.

2. Glorifying Real-World Violence:

Ethical concerns arise when video games exalt or sensationalize real-world violence without appropriate context or consequences. Such depictions, when excessive and lacking in contextual nuance, run the risk of desensitizing players to the gravity of violent actions, potentially shaping their perceptions and behaviors in the real world.

3. Promoting Gambling and Excessive Alcohol Consumption:

Some video games incorporate elements of gambling or depict excessive alcohol consumption as part of gameplay. This raises ethical concerns as it may normalize or encourage behaviors

detrimental to real-life well-being. Promotion of gambling can have adverse effects on individuals prone to addictive tendencies, while the glamorization of excessive alcohol consumption may contribute to health and social issues.

4. Blur Between Reality and Digital Experiences:

This ethical issue emerges when a video game blurs the boundary between the virtual realm and reality to an extent that may have psychological ramifications. Games simulating realistic scenarios or encouraging excessive immersion in the digital world may raise concerns about detachment from real-life responsibilities and relationships.

5. Promoting Criminal Activities:

Video games that romanticize or incentivize criminal activities present ethical challenges. While many games involve fictional scenarios, promoting criminal behavior without addressing consequences may convey ambiguous moral messages, potentially distorting players' understanding of morality and legality.

6. Influence of Violence on Players' Mental Well-being:

The ethical concern centers on the impact of violent content on players' mental well-being. Exposure to repetitive and graphic violence in video games has been associated with potential desensitization and heightened aggression. Ethical considerations necessitate understanding the psychological effects on players and implementing measures to balance entertainment value with responsible content creation.

Ethical Responsibilities for Rockstar Games:

In the pursuit of ethical considerations within the gaming industry, Rockstar Games is presented with specific recommendations to uphold responsible practices. Each directive underscores a commitment to user safety, the distinction between virtual and real-world consequences, and the promotion of a balanced gaming experience.

1. Implement Strict User Data Requirements:

Enforcing stringent user data requirements serves as a proactive measure to ascertain the legal age of players engaging with Rockstar Games' titles. This deliberate approach seeks to prevent underage individuals from accessing content deemed unsuitable for their age group. Ethically, this initiative aligns with the imperative to shield minors from potentially inappropriate or harmful gaming experiences.

2. Clarify Distinction Between Fiction and Reality:

Rockstar Games is urged to enhance the delineation between fictional in-game actions and their real-world implications. This strategic approach mitigates the risk of players conflating virtual activities with tangible consequences, thereby minimizing the potential for real-world harm. Ethically, this measure acknowledges the influential role that game content can play in shaping players' perceptions and behavior.

3. Restrict Gambling Features to Mitigate Addictive Behavior:

An ethical imperative is articulated, suggesting the imposition of restrictions on certain game activities, particularly those involving gambling elements. This strategic limitation aims to curtail the potential development of addictive behavior among players. Rockstar Games, by recognizing the impact on player well-being, actively contributes to the promotion of responsible gaming practices, aligning with ethical considerations.

4. Introduce Time Limits for Regular Breaks:

The proposal advocates for the incorporation of time limits within Rockstar Games' titles, fostering a gaming environment that encourages players to take regular breaks. This ethical practice responds to concerns regarding excessive gaming, which may have adverse effects on the physical and mental well-being of players. By promoting periodic breaks, Rockstar Games exemplifies a commitment to the holistic welfare of their gaming community.

References:

- CCPA. (2018). California Consumer Privacy Act of 2018.
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB375
- COPPA. (1998). Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.
<https://www.ftc.gov/enforcement/rules/rulemaking-regulatory-reform-proceedings/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule>
- DMCA. (1998). Digital Millennium Copyright Act.
<https://www.copyright.gov/legislation/dmca.pdf>
- ECA. (2019). Mission Statement. https://www.theeca.com/mission_statement

- EPO. (2019). How to apply for a European patent.
<https://www.epo.org/applying/european/Guide-for-applicants.html>
- ESA. (2019). Essential Facts About the Computer and Video Game Industry.
https://www.theesa.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ESA_Essential_facts_2019_final.pdf
- ESRB. (2018). ESRB Ratings Guide. <https://www.esrb.org/ratings-guide/>
- Forbes. (2022, September 18). GTA VI Hack: Everything You Need To Know About The Biggest Leak In Gaming History.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tristanlavalette/2022/09/18/gta-vi-hack-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-biggest-leak-in-gaming-history/>
- FTC. (2019). Protecting Personal Information: A Guide for Business.
<https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/protecting-personal-information-guide-business>
- ICO. (2018). Guide to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/>
- IGDA. (2018). Code of Ethics. <https://igda.org/about/code-of-ethics/>
- IGN. (2022, September 19). GTA 6 Footage Leaked Online by Hacker, Rockstar Confirms. <https://www.ign.com/articles/gta-6-footage-leaked-online-by-hacker-rockstar-confirms>
- ISO/IEC. (2013). ISO/IEC 27001: Information technology — Security techniques — Information security management systems — Requirements.
<https://www.iso.org/standard/54534.html>

- NIST. (2018). Framework for Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity, Version 1.1. <https://nvlpubs.nist.gov/nistpubs/CSWP/NIST.CSWP.04162018.pdf>
- PCI SSC. (2016). PCI DSS Quick Reference Guide: Understanding the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard version 3.2. https://www.pcisecuritystandards.org/documents/PCIDSS_QRGv3_2.pdf
- PEGI. (2018). PEGI Ratings. <https://pegi.info/page/pegi-ratings>
- TRIPS. (1994). Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/27-trips.pdf
- USPTO. (2019). General Information Concerning Patents. <https://www.uspto.gov/patents-getting-started/general-information-concerning-patents>
- Winslow, L. (2023, August 24). *GTA 6 leaker hacked Rockstar with just an amazon fire stick in a hotel room*. Kotaku. <https://kotaku.com/gta-6-rockstar-leak-hacker-amazon-fire-stick-hotel-1850770299>
- WIPO. (1967). Convention Establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization. https://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/convention/trtdocs_wo029.html