CASE STUDY

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| **ABSTRACT** |
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This case study presents the study of how twitch grew and became one the biggest esports live gaming entertainment of our generation creating many of the largest gaming events in history. This generated the attention of tech giants such as Amazon, Google, and Yahoo. The companies would compete in being able to acquire the gaming live streaming website. Twitch is the world’s leading social video platform and community for gamers. Each month, more than 100 million community members gather to watch and talk about video games with more than 1.7 million broadcasters. Although Twitch has grown to be an extreme leader in the live streaming world, their numbers and audience could be at risk.   
   
 Although Twitch has many successful streamers with massive followings, there are many who struggle to gain a few followers even after dedicating years of time and effort. Twitch’s current issue is that much of its fanbase is based solely on the creator/streamer’s loyal audience. This issue causes smaller streamers to have a hard time gaining viewers and in turn discourages many new content creators to stop streaming.

**There are three options can help grant conceptual expansion with Twitch are presented to dealing with this issue:  
1. Present streamers with a competitive contract**

**2. Give more incentives to subscribers of streamers**

**3. Provide more focus on other entertainment outlets within the company**

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| **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** |
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Twitch is a live streaming video service that mainly focuses on video game live streaming. It does not only include video games, the service also includes broadcasts of esports (competitive video game) competitions, music broadcasts, creative content, and IRL (in real life) streams. The purpose of this report is to provide Twitch with a way to promote some solutions to address that much of its fanbase is based solely on the creator/streamer’s loyal audience. This issue causes smaller streamers to have a hard time gaining viewers and in turn discourages many new content creators to stop streaming.

**There are three options can help grant conceptual expansion with Twitch are presented to dealing with this issue:  
1. Present streamers with a competitive contract**

**2. Give more incentives to subscribers of streamers**

**3. Provide more focus on other entertainment outlets within the company**

**We also use the following criteria to evaluate the options:  
1. Ease of implementation**

**2. Cost**

**3. Image of Company**

**4. Customer Satisfaction**

**Twitch History and Overview**

Twitch is an American based company that started in San Francisco, California as a startup company. Twitch focuses on video game live streaming and broadcasting esports competition. The company has grown so big that it has been acquired by Amazon Inc.. Twitch is one of the biggest online platforms when it comes to live streaming. Twitch broadcasts to millions of people every day and host very large events to describe the magnitude of how much success this company achieved

When twitch was first launched in 2007 by Justin Kan and Emmett Shear, It was first named justin.tv. The website started off as a reality show for Justin Kan’s life on a day-to-day basis and broadcast it live 24/7 from his point of view. This way of broadcasting started off as an experiment between the two creators. They wanted to create a big brother concept in other words someone would be watching the person in this case the audience would be watching Justin’s everyday life. Once the audience grew tired of the content Justin and Emmit opened up that platform so that anyone would be able to stream on their own accord. What became popular among Twitch was that their creators began to start streaming video games which was huge for Twitch and what it's mainly known for today. This changed the entertainment industry because of how unique this form of entertainment was. Unlike the entertainment platforms that we had then and that we have now such as television, YouTube, Netflix, or other streaming services, live streaming showcased all the raw and uncut visuals of daily life. This caught the attention of many media outlets and the company was growing gradually within time. The website had a gaming category which was very popular and grew very fast. In June 2011 justin.tv would rebrand their company as twitch.tv . That's when they decided to switch their main focus on the gaming aspect of live streaming. Implementing this exploded twitch gaining over 35 million unique active visitors a month watching about 2 hours a day. By the time it reached 2013 of June twitch had over 80 employees and increased to 100 employees by December. Twitch has created a monopoly in the market because it was the only service doing what it was doing with live streaming. This caused an influx with its competitors such as YouTube where they would ramp up with gaming content to try to compete with twitch. YouTube would try to come up with YouTube gaming but twitch was in a different league and still dominating the market. Twitch was so large in magnitude that it was the main source that provided esports. It was a full-blown multi million dollar industry. There would be full-time creators making a huge living and making the company even bigger. Twitch provides a community where viewers can interact with the streamer and help direct the content.

As of August 25th 2014 after gathering over 3 million active users twitch.tv was acquired by amazon for close to one billion dollars, which was in fact in a bidding war with google as google was willing to offer 1 billion for the company but unfortunately google backed out of the offer. It was a very close agreement that google would acquire Twitch but the reason they had backed out is because they felt that Twitch and Youtube would interfere with their antitrust concerns. Yahoo tried to acquire twitch for 920 million but amazon came in and managed to acquire twitch for close to 1 billion dollars. Today there are over 140 million twitch users on the platform and almost 4 million streamers. Due to the pandemic the numbers of Twitch skyrocketed due to more people being at home and on their computers. You can see Amazon's purchase of twitch as a play to take over the future of TV. More and more content is being streamed online and more and more hours of videos are being done on sites like YouTube, Netflix and Hulu. Amazon is essentially trying to take over all the market and acquiring Twitch helped them do that. In order to garner more revenue in 2016 twitch implemented a subscription service that gave certain benefits to users such as ad free streaming , emotes in game exclusives. This type of implementation also created more revenue for its creators. By implementing amazon prime with twitch’s prime subscriptions creates revenue for each company. In June 2016, Twitch added a new feature known as "Cheering", a special form of emoticon purchased as a microtransaction using an in-site currency known as "Bits". Bits are bought using Amazon payments, and cheers act as donations to the channel. Users also earn badges within a channel based on how much they have cheered. On August 16, 2016, Twitch acquired [Curse, Inc.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curse,_Inc.), an operator of online video gaming communities and gaming-oriented VoIP software. In December 2016, Good Game Agency was divested by Amazon to their respective members due to [conflict of interest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_of_interest) concerns. On September 30 2016, Twitch announced Twitch Prime, a service that provides premium features that are exclusive to users who have an active [Amazon Prime](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazon_Prime) subscription. This included advertising-free streaming, monthly offers of free add-on content such as in game loot, and game discounts. Games included with the game loot rewards were [Apex Legends](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apex_Legends), [Legends of Runeterra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legends_of_Runeterra), [FIFA Ultimate Team](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FIFA_Ultimate_Team), [Teamfight Tactics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teamfight_Tactics), [Mobile Legends: Bang Bang](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mobile_Legends:_Bang_Bang), [Doom Eternal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doom_Eternal), and more

**SWOT Analysis Matrix**

*Visual Matrix showing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the company*

| ***STRENGTHS*** | **WEAKNESSES** |
| --- | --- |
| * *Iconic Brand Name* * *Acquired from Amazon in 2014* * *Large user base* * *Pioneer in streaming market* * *Brand Loyalty* | * *Takes 50% of every subscription* * *Reliance on content creators* * *Free Services* |
| **OPPORTUNITIES** | **THREATS** |
| * *Use recognizability for potential partnerships* * *Room for innovation on features* * *Potential for exclusive contracts among creators* | * *Growing Competition (Youtube, Tiktok)* * *Adblock negating advertisements* * *Digital Security breach of sensitive information* |

**Current Issue/Problem**

Twitch has become a household name when it comes to streaming and gaming content. The platform has given opportunities to many as a new and exciting platform to share their content to the gaming community. Twitch has and is still currently paving the way for providing content creators a platform to express themselves and share their passion for gaming.

Although Twitch has many successful streamers with massive followings, there are many who struggle to gain a few followers even after dedicating years of time and effort. Twitch’s current issue is that much of its fanbase is based solely on the creator/streamer’s loyal audience. This issue causes smaller streamers to have a hard time gaining viewers and in turn discourages many new content creators to stop streaming.

**Options Analysis**

**Possible Solutions: These options can help grant conceptual expansion and can help Twitch, which is known mostly for streaming games, release/realize their own limitations**

**1. Present streamers with a competitive contract**

**2. Give more incentives to subscribers of streamers**

**3. Provide more focus on other entertainment outlets within the company**

**Evaluation Criteria: For evaluation of each option to make the decisions upon most effective solution for Twitch, these criteria will help evaluate each options:**

**1. Ease of implementation**

**2. Cost**

**3. Image of Company**

**4. Customer Satisfaction**

***Ease of Implementation*** refers to the level of difficulty towards implementing said solutions. It also refers to the length of time dedicated and fluidity of implementation. The best choice for the Twitch service would be one that is simple and doesn’t take a lot of time to execute.

***Cost***refers to the amount of expenses for putting a solution into effect, including any future commitment of reinvesting/continual expenses into solution. The best option for Twitch and most companies would be minimal costs to the company and reap immediate/long term benefits

***Image of Company*** refers to how the audience perceives the company. Is the company still put in a box? Will the solution inform the public about the entirety of the company plus its potentials? The best solution would be one that widens public perception of the company and instills curiosity.

***Customer Satisfaction*** refers to how happy customers are with services and capabilities. The more you broaden the horizons of what Twitch has/can have to offer, the more space the community can have to offer. Twitch should be a welcoming community that helps connect streamers with their audiences and helps viewers discover new interests.

Analysis of Options, using Evaluation Criteria

**Present streamers with a competitive contract**

Twitch is already losing big name streamers due to offering lower-paying contracts than other streaming services popping up, such as Youtube implementing their streaming service. Twitch is allegedly offering less because the company feels comfortable as the leader of the streaming industry, and so they do not feel like they should be offering higher-paid contracts to retain viewership. Generally, becoming too comfortable just means no advancement or development. The last thing Twitch wants to do is remain stagnant in an ever-changing and fast paced industry. Instead of offering less to individual streamers, if they presented a high paying competitive contract between two streamers, wherein the winner wins the contract, that would be the better solution for Twitch. The winning conditions would consist of who has more streams, impact, etc. In response to the competitive environment, streamers would have more focus on quality of performance, which would ensure view satisfaction. The competition would naturally bring more entertainment, Twitch would be able to retain more streamers from switching over, and it brings a more sense of fairness to the distribution of contracts to streamers.

The **Ease of Implementation** would be high, lower being difficult. Twitch would just have to revert back to their previous contracts that had more appeal for streamers to stay and not switch in the first place. Difference is they wouldn’t be distributing high-paying contracts to individual streamers each, instead they would be placing a contract between two parties, the winning party receiving said contract. That means less contracts to write up, all they would need to implement are rules of competition into these contracts

The **Cost** would be low because the amount of contracts with high paying awards can be cut in half if placed between two parties instead of individually. While lower paying contracts keep the costs lower, the service rate will drop as streamers switch over to other services due to “low-ball” contracts. Competitive contracts will still be able to maintain satisfaction due to the fair premise of competing against one another, instead of relying purely on the decision of the company.

The **Image of Company** would be medium because it wouldn’t necessarily expand public perception of the company since competitive contracts would have more relevance with gamers since games are essentially competitive. The rules of streaming competition can apply to all types of streaming outlets, they just wouldn’t be as high stakes as gaming. However, it can still instill curiosity within viewers to see how different streamers will up their performance quality to win the contract.

The **Customer Satisfaction** would be medium because competitive contracts are essentially more for the streamer satisfaction. However, performance quality will be higher within streamers in reaction to the competitive environment. Better quality means more viewer satisfaction, but the community may become less welcoming when steamers and viewers are split in half, competing and rooting against each other.

**More incentive to subscribe**

Without the subscribers, streamers and streaming services would not be as big as today. Think of subscribers as VIP, and in terms of business, they are the top-tier customer pool, so it is important to give them reasons to stay loyal. It is also just as important to give people a reason to become subscribers in the first place, so giving more incentives to subscribe would be beneficial for Twitch. It would be a sort of mutualistic relationship where both sides can benefit. The incentives that can come with a subscription are more emotes, subscriber badges, ad-free viewing, exclusive gifts, etc.

The **Ease of Implementation** would be high, meaning a high level of ease. Since Twitch already has a subscription model, the complex process is already dealt with. It is just a matter of refining the model with more incentives for subscribers.

The **Cost** would be low because most of these incentives are non-monetary, such as emotes, badges, etc. Exclusive gifts and rewards have a cost but since subscriptions are generally a recurring-billing model, revenue would be coming back to the company and affiliates.

The **Image of Company** would be low. This solution wouldn’t necessarily inform the public about the entirety of the company and its potential, only its subscription model if the public is even interested. It’s like you would already have to be familiar with Twitch to appreciate the subscriber incentives. However, for people not familiar with Twitch, it would not broaden their perception of the company outside of just gaming.

The **Customer Satisfaction** would be high. Subscribers would definitely be more happy with more perks and non-subscribers will be excited/curious to subscribe. With more subscribers, there would be more relationships within the community rather than just having viewers in and out. Subscribers are different from followers because subscribers support their favorite channels financially through monthly donations while followers add channels to a follow list for easier access. That adds a sense of commitment and loyalty to Twitch and their streamer affiliates, which would tighten the connection within the community.

**Provide other entertainment outlet**

Many entertainment services are branching out and investing in different ways to provide content, so Twitch should try focusing on the same thing by investing into and producing different entertainment sources. Variety of outlets would broaden the audience range and break Twitch out of the public perception of being just purely for gamers. Unless you are already a part of the Twitch community, the public wouldn’t really know about the other forms of entertainment channels Twitch has to offer such as arts-and-crafts, in-real-life streams, music, sports, etc.

The **Ease of Implementation** is low, high being easy. When implementing these, Twitch will have to keep in mind: where in the app they would implement these features, if they will show for everybody, how much space it would take, coming up with patch notes, and letting our users know ahead of time. Marketing for these outlets would have to be done beforehand which would consist of advertisements and sponsorships

The **Cost** would be Medium. Must take into consideration increasing the scale of the number of entertainment outlets Twitch would invest in, as well as advertising, which would require a lot of expenses. However, the immediate to long-term benefits would be substantial as revenue streams would diversify from just a specialty for a specific audience to a variety of channels for a diverse audience, increasing service rate.

The **Image of Company** would be high. Investing in more services for users, users will see that Twitch wants to keep them entertained and with fresh new content. It will also boost discoverability since the focus is shifted from just their specialty, which is gaming, but expands their focus out to other forms of entertainment with their own audiences. Those audiences outside of the Twitch community would be more drawn to their service according to their range of interests that Twitch can provide service for.

The **Customer Satisfaction** would be high as well. New features will always excite old customers. Customers new to the service don’t have to be just focused on gaming when other entertainment channels are available. It diversifies user satisfaction with an individual and expands potential new user’s satisfaction as their interest may not be in gaming but other channels such as arts-and-crafts, music, sports, etc. It also broadens the sense of welcoming within the Twitch community as people don’t have to feel alienated if they are not into games as they can be curious about the other channels, possibly forming new interests.

**Option Analysis Matrix**

*Visual comparison comparing options to evaluation criteria*

|  | Ease of Implementation | Cost | Image Of company | Customer Satisfaction |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Option 1 - Present streamers with competitive contracts | 🔵🔵🔵 | 🔵 | 🔵🔵 | 🔵🔵🔵 |
| Option 2 - Give more incentive to subscribers of streamers | 🔵🔵🔵 | 🔵 | 🔵 | 🔵🔵🔵 |
| Option 3 - Provide more focus on other entertainment outlets within the company | 🔵 | 🔵🔵 | 🔵🔵🔵 | 🔵🔵🔵 |

Ease of Implementation: More (🔵)’s = the easier it would be to implement

Cost: More (🔵)’s = the more expensive it will be

Image of Company: More (🔵)’s = the more it will benefit the image of the company

Customer Satisfaction: More (🔵)’s = the more satisfied customers will be

Recommendation : Option 3, Provide other entertainment outlets

After the evaluation of all three options with the same criteria, Option 3 seems to be the most promising. The most important criteria for the company is the Image and Customer Satisfaction, the other options have many possible benefits, but Option 3 satisfies these criteria the most.

There is a new precedence of streamers acquiring contracts with their respective streaming service and Twitch has even made steps in this direction. It would require little planning to make these contracts and the image of the company would be slightly boosted with people knowing of Twitch’s interest in keeping these streamers. With content creators being paid more this could possibly motivate them to create inspired content which benefits customer satisfaction but this theory is subjective. While there is talk of these contracts in the streaming space, the amount of funds required to create competitive contracts for the majority of our streamers is not justifiable at this time.

Option 2 benefits our current and seasoned users but falls behind in the area of innovation. Over the years Twitch has implemented new ways to benefit subscribers and long time users. Some examples include, new chat features, new emoticons, bits (Twitch’s currency) as well as twitch prime benefits. These additions are easy to implement and cost low but could be daunting to the new Twitch user. Over saturation of these incentives make subscribing more complex and less approachable, it would be wiser for the company to incorporate features that entice new users.

With more focus on other entertainment outlets, this will bring Twitch into a new light and provide access to different demographics. Twitch is known for its gaming content but with this option the image of the company will become more diverse and more accessible to different markets. Planning and implementation will be difficult, with the team having to pay attention to detail for every step of this project. Twitch must allocate the correct amount of funds for an engineering team and a project management team. Making sure this new content is discoverable and relatable is crucial. While the cost is high, and planning takes a lot of time and energy, a successful project will be more approachable than ever. The company's image will reflect well on a larger and growing user base. Content creators will have a new platform and users will have new content to discover.

**Conclusion:**

Twitch continues to uphold its legacy as a streaming service icon and provides unique and diverse entertainment for free to users around the world. Although Twitch had a headstart in the streaming marketplace, the company is threatened of losing their audience by their high subscription model and other growing streaming services like YouTube, Facebook and TikTok. To sustain the business Twitch must find innovative ways to bring new content and excite their user base.

Twitch would greatly benefit their business model by incorporating Option Three - providing other entertainment outlets. Allocating resources into the development of these outlets, would have the company reaching different entertainment markets and it would increase their recognition. The other possible solutions cost less and are easier to plan but with the goal of growing their user base and keeping current users on their platform, this option proves the most efficient. With many viable options, providing focus on other entertainment will satisfy the goal of growing their user base and keeping current users loyal. Acting on this ambition will solidify twitch as a streaming service icon.

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Twitch is where millions of people come together live every day to chat, interact, and make their own entertainment together. At Twitch, our mission is to provide the best shared social video experience created by our growing community where creators and communities can interact safely. To achieve this goal, we ask that all users participate in such a way that promotes a friendly, positive experience for our global community.  
  
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Game Developer was first founded in 1997 as Gamasutra and has strived since its inception to be a leading resource and reference for game development and industry knowledge. Following the shift from Gamasutra to Game Developer in August 2021, the site has maintained that mission while embracing the in-depth content its namesake Game Developer magazine is known for.

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For strengths and weaknesses in SWOT analysis:   
  
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We exist to celebrate, to critique and to share passion in audience fandom. Our collective takes audiences on a lifelong journey, from finding their first guitar via Guitar.com and discovering new artists in NME, to deciphering the latest creator tools and technologies via MusicTech, and unpacking decades of music history in Uncut.