

Halo Infinite needs to improve its live service model

By **Francisco Figueroa**, Contributor, PC Gamer Magazine

The newest iteration of *Halo*, the acclaimed video game franchise, offers a free to play, live service model for its online multiplayer. This can end up being a bad thing, but it doesn't have to be.

Live service games have been loved and hated for a long time, since the first days of *Fortnite*, or *World of Warcraft* if you wish to go further back. These games create content and give players reasons to keep coming back, whether for a new character skin, to play in a new event, or to gather bits and bobs for bragging rights.

For the sake of nitpicking and amateur critique, I'll say that *Halo Infinite* has not implemented the live service model as well as it could, and the multiplayer is suffering for it.

Do not misunderstand. *Halo* is still great. The game is not lacking for the basics by any means. It feels good to play, it feels good to shoot, to move, to memorize map patterns. The game itself is fun to play, and the reviews are telling.

The problem lies in the content. Rather, the lack of content upon release.

Halo Infinite is a free to play, live service videogame. This means that the game is meant to change. To update itself with different events, game modes and, basically, new things for players to do, all over a certain span of time until the next sequel.

Not long after release, there were active complaints online about *Infinite's* missing content. Content that was once present in past Halo titles.

Two player cooperative play. Level builders and customizers. Game modes. Being able to pick what modes you wanted to play. Player customization and cosmetics, to make their virtual avatar unique. The content was either missing, or in the case of customization, it was implemented poorly.

Customization was, and continues to be a hot button topic for Halo fans on social media, from Youtube to Twitter and smaller platforms like Reddit. Unlike in past games, *Halo Infinite* has monetized the way a player can choose to look in-game. Helmets, kneepads, gloves, and fancy paint jobs cost real money now. Not in-game credits that players could have earned years ago, but credit-card currency.

343 Industries, the developer behind this newest Halo, has been active on Twitter to address the missing content, and put release dates for when to expect what. The response to backlash has been fast, succinct, and impressive.

On the other hand, the trailers and marketing for *Halo Infinite*, more or less, outright lied about its monetization practices. From the official Halo account on YouTube, on a video, “millions of customization options” were meant to be available to players from day 1.

To nitpick, and to quote the Live Design Director Ryan Paradis, there would be “no random loot boxes”. Fans assumed that the “loot” would not be paid for but rather earned by playing the game.

Partly true. Instead, there would be set prices for buying armor, and there would be a list of items that one could earn for free by playing the game. Good, but what frustrated players was how limited this list was, coupled with the number of items that were still locked behind a price tag.

Without items to unlock, and with parts of the game missing until further notice, players lose the incentive to play the game. The live service model begins to fail when the game has little to offer for players.

On *STEAM*, the site to purchase and download games, the daily player count of *Halo Infinite* is recorded for PC players. Since *Infinite*'s release in November, the number of active players has gone from over 100, 000 online, to 50, 000 in December, and now 30, 000 this January. Without content, players are steadily losing reasons to play and putting down their remotes.

When *Infinite*'s own studio manager Chris Lee was interviewed by IGN last year, there were already plans made for this Halo to be the last, for “the foreseeable future.” No Halo 7, and no plans for sequels or spinoffs. The promise was a new platform for Halo that would last another ten years.

This is the Halo that fans will have to stick to for a presumably very long time.

343 Industries has done a fantastic job keeping players updated with changes to the game, and promises future updates to solve the content issue. Frankly, there is something to be said when a game's biggest flaw is not having more of the same. The game is good, but it needs more. More free armor, more game modes, and all around more incentive to stick around and play.

The problem comes when the live service model, to update a game over time, becomes an excuse to release an unfinished product and to build it as time goes on, like constructing a railway while a train is approaching behind you. For *Halo Infinite*, the train is on the move, and the rails just weren't built to standard.

For the sake of gaming fans everywhere, one can only hope this doesn't become the new industry standard. Live service gaming can be a good thing, but players need more to work with from the start. At the moment, so does Halo.