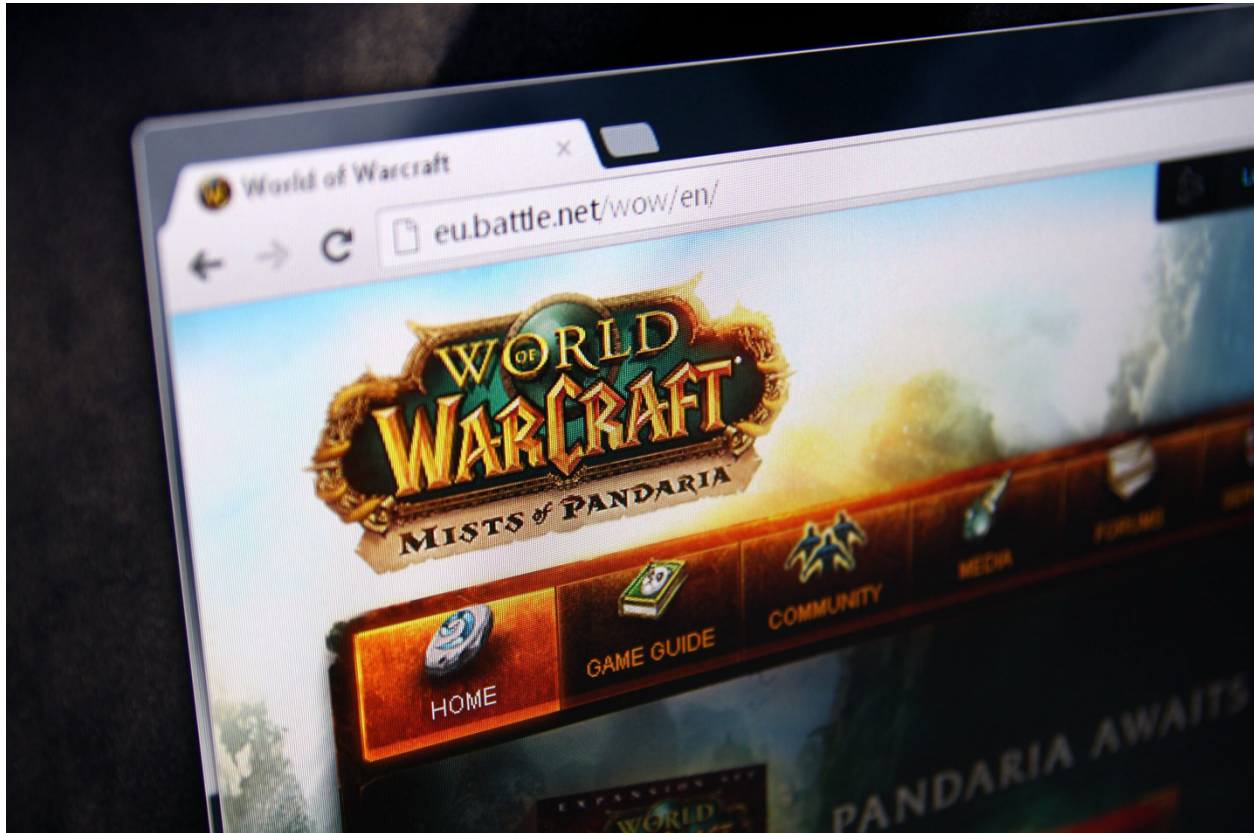# Game on

Top professionals reveal the unexpected ways gaming is shaping business leadership

By Dillon Lowe

When Adrian Owen Jones first picked up World of Warcraft as a college student in 2008, she was new to the world of video games and could not have predicted how profound an impact the title would ultimately have on her.

It didn't take long for the massively multiplayer online game, or MMO, to immerse her completely in its world. She says she fell in love almost immediately with the game's challenging mechanics, highly cooperative gameplay and progressive player base.

Before long, she found herself in the top 0.2% of global players. She had become a member of the top guild—a group of players who band together to tackle daunting quests—on one of the top servers in the world.

And though she doesn't get the chance to play as much these days, she reflects on her time as a top-tier WoW player as an experience that taught her everything she needed to know about how to be a successful leader in business—lessons that have proved invaluable throughout her professional career, including in her current role as a partner at local management consulting firm [Success Labs](#).

"If you've ever played a game at a really high level, you know it kind of stretches your brain in a way that few other things do," she says.

Her experience with gaming is not a wholly unique one. What was once dismissed by many as a mindless form of entertainment has revealed itself to be something more: a unique training ground for professional traits like adaptability, collaboration and problem-solving, among many others. All this to say, the lessons learned and skills acquired through gaming can—and often do—prove surprisingly relevant in the modern workplace.

For Owen Jones, such lessons and skills are myriad.

For starters, as the leader of a team of healers, she taught herself how to best recruit players who would prioritize the good of the entire guild over individual gain—in other words, hiring for culture fit. She also learned how to create an environment that her 24 fellow guild members actually wanted to show up to on a consistent basis—fostering a positive culture, some might call it. And she developed a system for tracking the performance metrics of her peers so that she would be able to offer them constructive feedback to ensure accountability and optimize performance—a data-driven performance management system.

"I've had a really diverse career experience," Owen Jones says, "so when people look at my background, they're kind of like, 'How did you do all this stuff and do it at a high level?' And I think it's because I've always been strategic about showing up, seeing where there was a gap or a need and learning like hell to fill that gap. I'm the same way with gaming."

Owen Jones isn't the only member of the local business community who has been able to apply the insights gleaned through gaming to the workplace.

Lex Adams, founder and CEO of Vigilus, a local cybersecurity and software development company, has had a similar journey. He has over 4,000 hours logged in Team Fortress 2, a multiplayer first-person shooter, and over 3,000 hours logged in Dota 2, a multiplayer real-time strategy game. He says he "easily" has over 10,000 hours logged across all games just in his adult life.

Adams, who fancies himself "one of the better tech recruiters" in Baton Rouge, credits much of his team-building expertise to his time as a competitive TF2 player. In fact, some of the players he recruited to his TF2 team back in the day actually work for him now.

"This kind of chimera emerges when I take a competitive gamer and put them in a corporate setting," he says. "I find they tend to thrive."

There are studies to back that claim up. A 2024 study published in BioMed Central's Alzheimer's Research & Therapy journal, for instance, found that gamers may have better memory, stronger problem-solving skills and lower risk for dementia than non-gamers.

Team building is far from the only skill Adams honed through gaming, though. As a shot caller in competitive TF2 matches, he had to clearly articulate strategies to his teammates and make split-second decisions that could be acted upon immediately, thereby sharpening his skills as a communicator.

He also points to the mental acuity and resilience that gamers tend to develop as a boon for business. Competitive gaming demands a high degree of focus and the ability to quickly recover from setbacks—traits he has carried into his career.

"The team building, the shot calling, the thinking, the competitiveness—these are all things that have translated extremely well to my corporate and everyday life," Adams says.

Christopher Douglas, a New Orleans-based business project manager for Xbox Game Camp, is yet another example of how gaming can shape professional skills. As a student at New Orleans' Xavier University of Louisiana, he played fighting games like Marvel vs. Capcom and Street Fighter as well as first-person shooters like Call of Duty and Halo at a professional level.

In doing so, he sharpened many of the same skills cited by Owen Jones and Adams: communication, critical thinking, resilience and the like.

"Games do have a great social impact and social value," he says. "[The business community] should keep an open mind and understand that gaming is about more than mindlessly tapping buttons for hours on end."

Today, Douglas is grateful to have been able to parlay his years of gaming experience into a career in the industry. In his role at Xbox Game Camp, a program developed by Microsoft to empower and support aspiring game developers, he works to break down barriers for members of marginalized communities looking to do the same.

"We want everyone from every walk of life to feel wanted and welcome in the gaming industry," Douglas says. "Xbox Game Camp is built upon the belief that extraordinary talent resides everywhere."

THE NEXT GENERATION

One Baton Rougean who is leveraging the power of gaming to train the next generation of professionals is Christopher Turner.

Turner directs the Southern University Law Center's [Mixed Reality Virtual Innovation Gaming and Esports Institute](#), which offers students access to innovative programs at the intersection of education, gaming and technology. (For those unfamiliar, the term "esport" refers to a multiplayer game played competitively for spectators, typically by professional gamers.)

In 2023, Turner helped Southern University launch its [Esports Innovation Lab](#), a state-of-the-art facility equipped for both broadcasting and competition.

That same year, he also had a hand in introducing the Southern University Law Center's Esports Law and Management Certification, a pioneering program designed to prepare students for careers on the business and legal sides of competitive play.

"Gaming is a massive industry," says Turner, who is also the director and founder of the esports teams of both Southern University and Southern University Laboratory School. "It's bigger than movies, music or any other form of entertainment. And you need a workforce to make it happen."

Turner isn't wrong about the immensity of the gaming industry.

The global gaming market was valued at $281.77 billion in 2023 and is anticipated to reach a $665.77 billion valuation by 2030, according to Fortune Business Insights. The global esports market, meanwhile, was valued at $2.06 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach a $9.29 billion valuation by 2032.

And while the programs Turner has a hand in are certainly anchored in the world of gaming, he says the skills that students develop through those programs are ubiquitous.

"Gaming is here to stay," he says. "It's not going anywhere. And the skills are transferable."

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