

Looker Solutions for Gaming

Level Up Your Data Strategy and Make Games that Win



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Introduction

In 2020, it's safe to say the gaming industry is thoroughly driven by data – from player acquisition to lifetime value analysis to ad performance.

As competition mounts with over 2 million apps in the app store and countless more being added every day, data's importance for game makers only grows.

Companies are spending billions of dollars on game development and advertisements. So it's critical to understand how those investments are converting into users and revenue.

Below is a summary of the important areas we'll discuss where data matters the most:

- **User acquisition and retention:** How to maximize new and existing users by understanding what attracts and keeps them.
- **Monetization:** How to drive monetization strategy and match players' journeys to their preferences.
- **User journeys:** How to understand how players traverse your games, and measure and test the effectiveness of new updates.
- **Game overviews and key performance indicators (KPIs):** How to gain comprehensive views of games for all stakeholders.

How data-savvy a gaming company is has a direct correlation to customer lifetime value and financial success.

Where Looker Fits In

With Looker, you can unlock player insights, invest in valuable players, shape your monetization strategy, and build better games. Data teams can empower product managers, marketers, game producers, and creative teams to make better decisions with data they trust.

Go beyond typical BI dashboards and reports—craft data experiences that will get the right information to the right people, exactly when they need it. Your data can become an integrated part of everyday workflows and applications, making it the default for everyone to make data-driven decisions.

You can centralize data coming from:

- App stores
- Advertising networks
- Finance reports
- Player and behavioral data

Putting all this information in one place gives you a big-picture view of what's happening and why. You can even automate workflows and build custom applications with your data.

In this white paper, we'll show you how Looker can help you get ahead in gaming analytics by using our [Gaming Analytics Block](#), and a few other platform features. We'll dive into the following use cases:

1. User Acquisition and Retention
2. User Engagement
3. App Monetization
4. Organization-Wide Insights

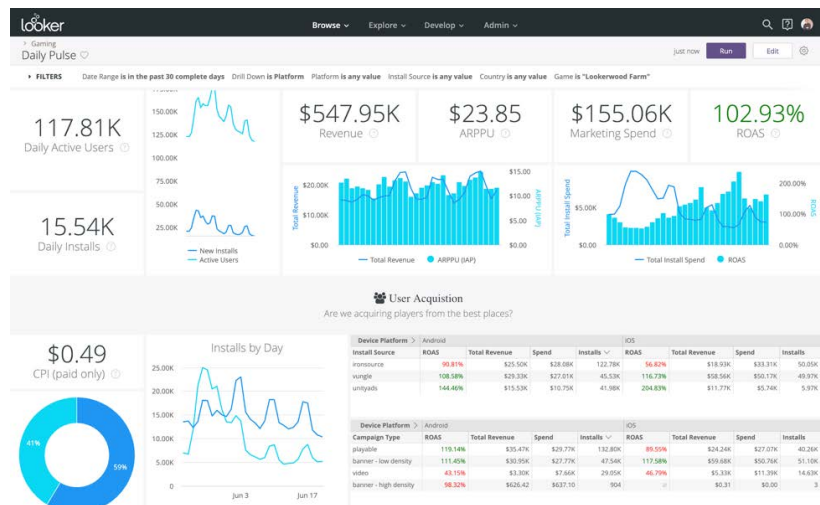


What are Looker Blocks?

Looker Blocks are pre-built pieces of code (from optimized SQL patterns to fully built-out data models) that accelerate your analytics. They get you up and running quickly, with generalized analytics and visualizations you can customize to your specific needs.

The Looker Gaming Analytics Block

The **Looker Gaming Analytics Block** has 50+ KPIs specific to gaming, including: retention, user acquisition (UA), monetization, sessionized events, user fact tables, funnel explorers, and more.



The gaming block allows you to:

Get the big picture quickly.

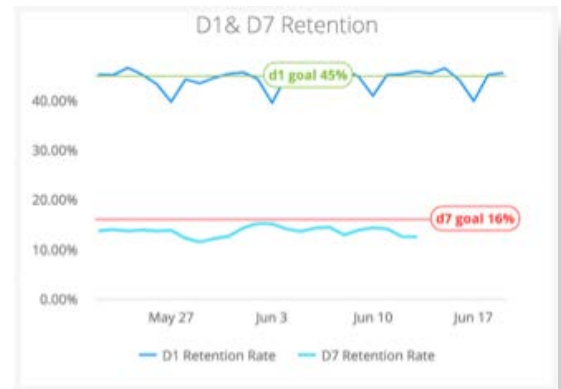
- Explore the entire lifecycle of your players in a centralized view.
- Combine 50+ standardized measurements with hundreds of dimensions. With these tools, you can measure user journeys the same way across your game portfolio.

Looker's gaming analytics solutions accelerate time to insight and enable you to turn those insights into results. With Looker you'll be able to:

- **Set up self-service analytics**, freeing up your data teams to focus on harder problems.
- **Standardize data definitions** so your whole organization is aligned around a single source of truth.
- **Integrate all data sources** into a more comprehensive analysis.
- **Integrate governed, standardized data into downstream workflows** and applications for concrete results.

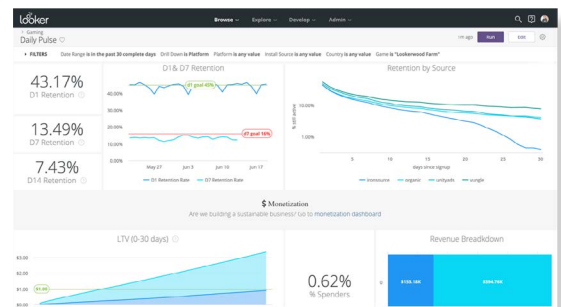
Measure engagement.

- Dive deep into what your players are doing before they drop off. You can do this by examining retention metrics alongside D1 and D7 metrics.
- Calculate which events go together and create unique session identifiers. Then use the funnel explorer to see what players did within sessions.



Measure monetization.

- Calculate and benchmark daily Return on Ad Spend (ROAS) to determine campaign spend.
- Easily calculate metrics like revenue after UA at any level, per game, per country, or per player segment. And, understand revenue before a user has fully matured to focus on segments that are monetizing quickest.
- Leverage custom segmentation to get a clear idea of ad revenue that doesn't rely on in-app purchases (IAP).
- Save on database queries by using session and player level metrics instead of event level metrics.





Use Case I: User Acquisition and Retention

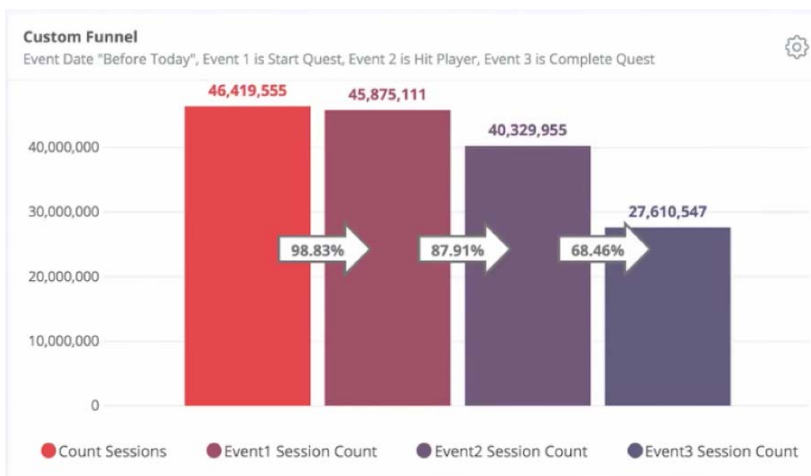
The faster you can attract new users, the more revenue you can drive to your bottom line. It's important to be able to make acquisition decisions quickly, and to be able to identify new user segments so you can determine how to target them.

Equally important is measuring retention. For this, the crucial first step is to understand how your users are experiencing your games.

How Can Looker Help With Acquisition and Retention?

User Segmentation and Player Funnel Analysis

The Gaming Analytics Block leverages user acquisition and behavioral data. This enables you to optimize marketing spend and drive sticky user behavior. And when you segment users, you get a deep understanding of their behavior.



To maximize user acquisition and retention, it helps to focus on these three key areas:

1. Where you're losing players.
2. If players are playing your game as your developers intended.
3. Optimizing your conversion paths.

Player funnel analysis makes it easier to visualize, analyze, and measure user journeys through your game to figure these things out.

Real-World Story: Futureplay

Futureplay is a fast-growing mobile games studio with more than one million daily players and 5 unique games.

The company uses Looker to know which ads, channels and regions bring in the most high-value players.

Futureplay visualizes this information all in one place. The data sits right next to internal ad spend, number of installs and lifetime value benchmarks. The result? They're constantly picking up on patterns for what the highest value activities are.

The company even built a BidBot to help optimize and automate user acquisition from within Looker. For networks with a bidding API – including Google and Facebook – they built an automated process that reads jobs from Looker each night to update bids accordingly.

For networks that don't have this API, Futureplay links the data in Looker to Google Sheets, so account managers can update bids directly without needing to log into Looker or other platforms.

[Read our in-depth case study](#) about how Futureplay uses Looker.

Futureplay analyst Camilo Fitzgerald told us:

"It shows us the payback windows on how long it takes the spend to return to us, per channel, per campaign, per country, per network, or per game. We know how much we expect a user to be worth, how much we are bidding, and the predictive ROI per install. We can set up an action to increase or decrease the bid. It's allowed us to really scale our user acquisition without worrying about optimizing bids. Instead, we can focus on our creative strategy."

[Read our in-depth case study](#)



Use Case II: User Engagement

The more compelling the user experience, the longer players stay in the game (and the higher your revenue will be).

To measure user experience, you need to understand player styles, which users are the most profitable, and where users are spending their time. When you understand these, you can capitalize on the smartest ad spend and monetization opportunities.

How Can Looker Help With User Engagement?

Three ways:

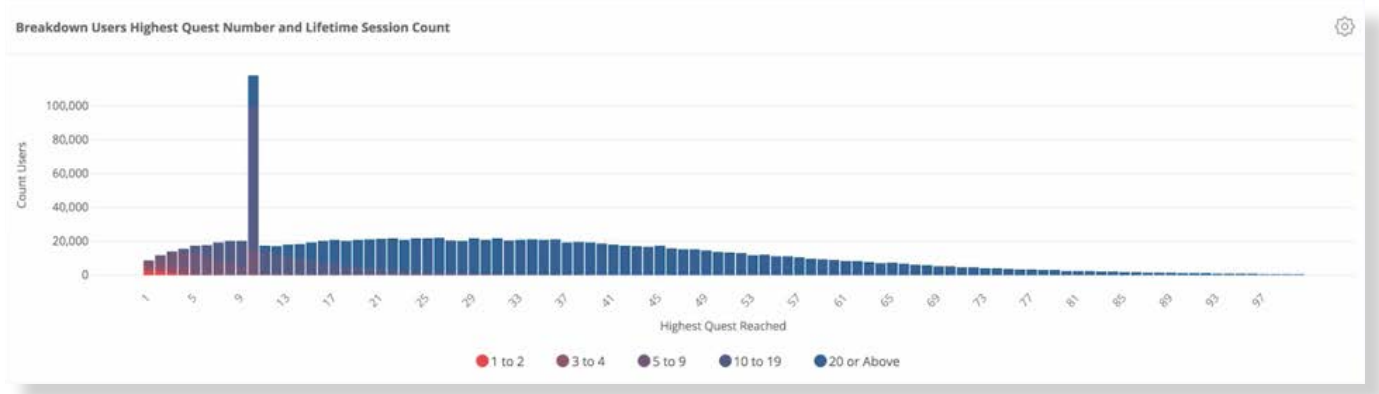
1. The Gaming Analytics Block
2. Visualization
3. Machine learning

Gaming Analytics Block

With the sessionization feature of the gaming block, you can track user flows to optimize user experience, improve retention, and increase conversion rates. The block enables you to sessionize event data and use the funnel explorer to visualize custom flows through your game.

Visualization

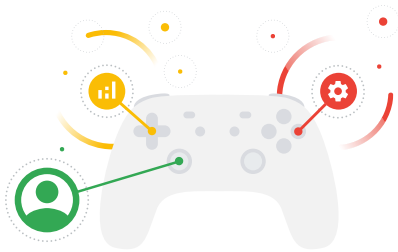
Imagine a visualization that shows you how far in your game your players get before they stop playing. Imagine a dramatic increase in players quitting the game at a particular level (in the case below, level 10).



It's a clear indication that something is driving players away at that particular point in the game—potentially a difficulty issue or a glitch. Thanks to the visual, you can go investigate and make a change that will keep players moving through your game.

Machine Learning

Looker is also seamlessly integrated with [BigQueryML](#), enabling out-of-the-box machine learning (ML) based predictive analytics using standard SQL. The accessible, user-friendly ML models allow your team to take user engagement analytics to the next level, including managing matchmaking and ranking, targeting promotions to play styles, or using matrix factorization to build custom product recommendations.



Use Case III: App Monetization

The concept of optimizing your monetization strategy is relatively straightforward: find out what makes money, and then do more of it. If your players are engaged, the next step is to make valuable recommendations to them—whether through in-app purchases, or surfacing the ads they'll want to click. This could mean offering players additional power-ups if your data shows they're drawn to them. It could be showing them ads that perform well for their user segment.

How Can Looker Help With Monetization?

Return on Ad Spend

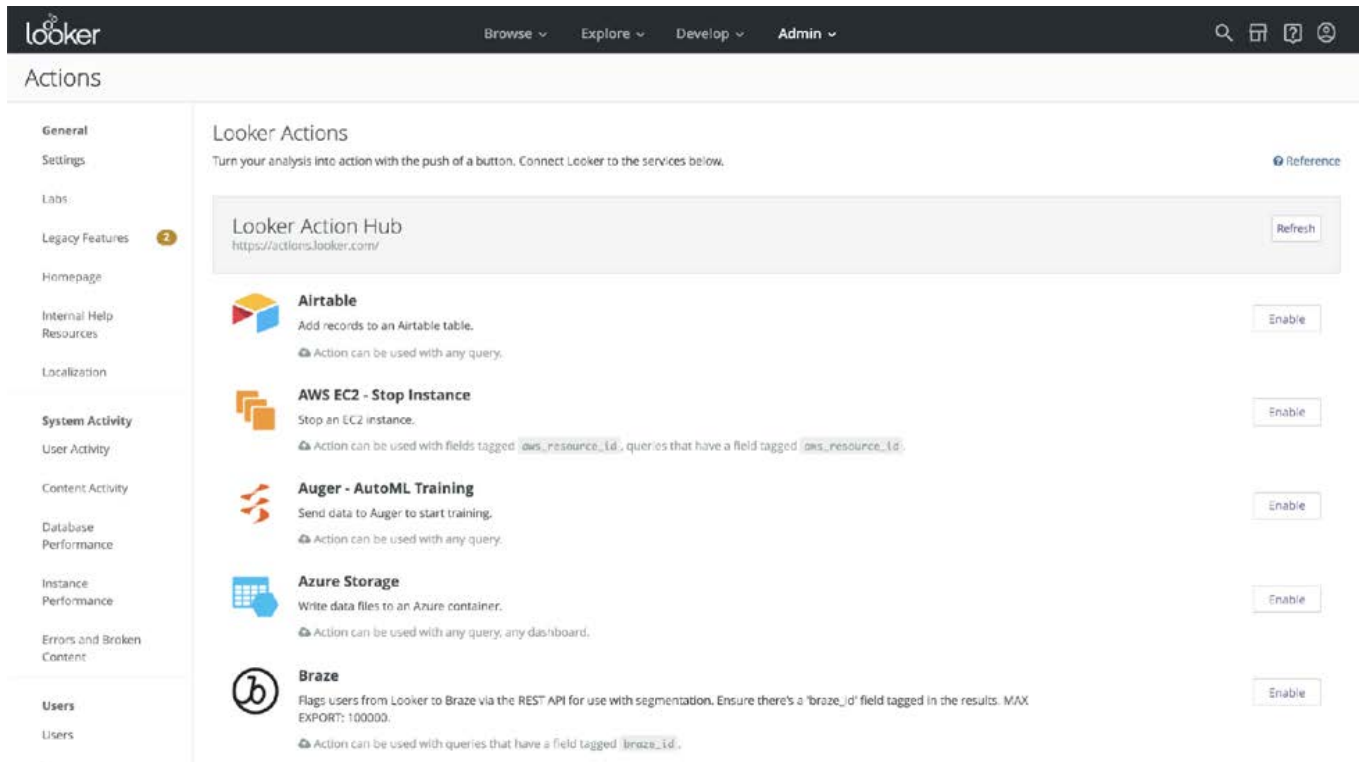
Smart gaming companies focus on the user segments that monetize the quickest. That's why our Gaming Analytics Block lets you quickly determine your return on ad spend, so you can focus on those valuable segments.

But you can take it a step further.

Automate Your Monetization Strategy with the Action Hub

Once you have this information in hand, you can make it so that Looker automates the appropriate responses for you—say, surfacing ads that perform well more frequently.

This can be set up using the Looker Action Hub.



Real-World Story: Futureplay's AdBot

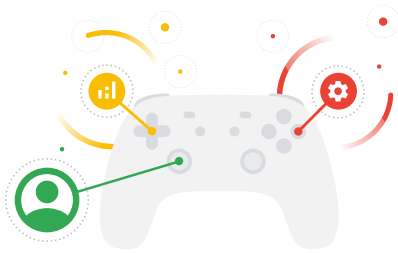
After Futureplay created its BidBot with Looker, the company added an AdBot. The bot monitors impressions and revenue by ad stream to track the performance of each ad.

Based on the information, AdBot automatically decides the right ad to show each player to maximize yield.

"It's really actionable and we can take optimization actions. We are alerted when we need to see something," says Fitzgerald.

What is the Looker Action Hub?

The Looker Action Hub connects Looker to your other business systems so that you can act on the data you see right within Looker. You can also set it up to take action automatically based on what your data shows. See the real-world story on this page.



Use Case IV: Organization-Wide Insights

Looker provides a universal ‘source of truth’ for your data sources and definitions. When everyone understands not only what is happening, but why it’s happening, good, strategic decisions are made for the benefit of the company.

Insights breed collaboration between studios, game teams and management.

- Producers can understand how players engage with the game, and how to optimize game performance.
- Creative teams can see which assets players gravitate toward.
- Marketing can decide how to maximize the value of the UA budget and increase ROAS, and assess user retention trends.
- Monetization and live ops teams can analyze how the game is making money and revisit IAP and ad strategies.
- Management can assess overall business performance, and predict and increase player lifetime value (pLTV).

How Can Looker Help Surface Organization-Wide Insights?

Simply put: get the data in front of the people who need to see it.

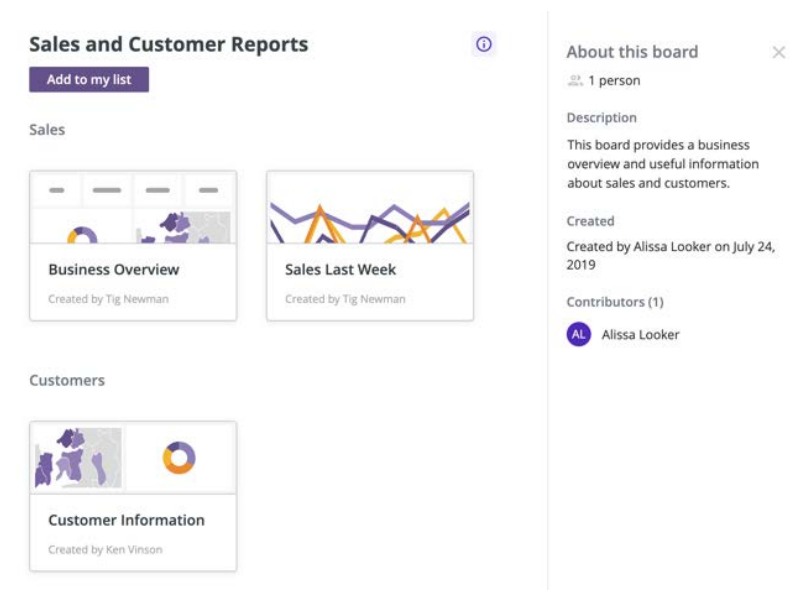
While Looker has many tools to help you with this, our top three picks are:

Data Deliveries

You can ask Looker to send data to your coworkers via email, using webhooks, through Slack, and other services on a regular schedule. That means the person heading up your monetization strategy can get a report on ad performance and in-app purchases in their inbox every Monday morning (or as often as they choose).

Team Boards

You can list all the reports relevant for a particular team together in a [Looker board](#). This makes your reports more discoverable by the people who need them, and provides a useful landing page for teammates to return to.



Embedding

Yep, you can put a Looker dashboard in any of your other work tools using an iframe. This makes it so that your coworkers don't have to worry about opening a separate window for Looker. Instead, they can find reports in the course of their typical workflow.

Looker + Google Cloud for gaming = Winning with Data

If you're looking for even more power to support your games, consider the Google Cloud gaming ecosystem. It can help you scale your matchmaking, improve your player experience with built-in AI capabilities, deploy servers around the world to take your game global, and power your back-end with a flexible and scalable data warehouse.

And then there's Firebase, Google's mobile platform that helps you develop high-quality gaming apps. Not only will you accelerate your development, but your analytics too: Looker's Firebase Analytics for Google BigQuery block will make sure you can access deep insights on how people use your app.

Conclusion and Resources

With Looker, you can measure many disparate things in a single place – including engagement, monetization, activities, and acquisition – and understand the implications of those data points.

By helping your entire organization cohere around universal definitions of those measurements, everyone can collaborate on improving the player journey and experience.

Leveraging the Looker Gaming Analytics Block enables you to scale and grow easily, with both row-level and top-level data. You don't need to create a new analysis for each new game. Instead, you can apply analysis and common logic and models across your games and customize as needed. The time to value is vastly accelerated, as is the value of the information at your fingertips.

Learn more about Looker's gaming analytics ecosystem [here](#) and check out some useful resources on this page.

Resources

[King Case Study: Looker](#)

[King Case Study: Cloud](#)

[Futureplay Case Study: Looker](#)

["Level Up" Gaming Analytics Webinar](#)

[Looker Gaming Solutions](#)

[Gaming Podcast featuring Ernesto Ongaro](#)

[Human-Like Playtesting With Deep Learning \(King\): Medium](#)

[Unlock Your Game's Potential With Data and AI Webinar](#)

[Looker Gaming Analytics Block](#)