

U N I V E R S I D A D



DE LOS HEMISFERIOS

Facultad de Comunicación y Tecnologías de la Información

Tema:

The Community is the Game: A corporate communication proposal.

**Trabajo de Titulación para la obtención del Título de Licenciatura en
Comunicación**

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Quito, marzo 2021.

ABSTRACT

Corporate culture is a term that has gained popularity in the past years and is now one of the foundations for modern workspaces. Companies that are considered the best workplaces for the millennial generation have common characteristics such as a stable structure surrounding values, and communications that generate engagement not only with their community but with their employees as well. The corporate culture concept was first used by Dr. Elliott Jaques in 1951; it's popularity became higher when companies were looking for the "Why", expression used by Simon Sinek on the Golden Circle, helping companies focus on the more meaningful side of their businesses.

This proposal shows how a company is supposed to manage their organizational culture through internal communications and it is based on the example of the American video game developer and e-sports tournaments organizer, Riot Games. It is going to be supported by the Practical Application of the Theory of Motivations, a theory created by Professor José Antonio Pérez López and developed as a practical application by Ph.D. Diego Alejandro Jaramillo. The research uses a qualitative method, composed of a review of Riot Games documents and interviews with Riot Games employees John D. Gutierrez, Senior Sound Designer, and Dan Sutton, Director of Brand Management. Both interviews helped see the inside view of how Riot Games manages its communications and corporate culture, and how they managed to infuse it with their employees. In line with the proposed hypothesis that corporate culture is fundamental in the creation of an engaged community, the studied case of Riot Games showed that to create an engaged community, communication strategies must carry the values that the company has.

Palabras clave: Corporate culture, engagement, millennials, e-sports, Golden circle, Insights, Communication.

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DEDICATORIA

*“Always aim high, work hard, and care
deeply about what you believe in”. -*

Hillary Clinton

A mi mamá, mi papá, mi hermana, mi familia, amigos y la FCom. Siempre pensé que era una mala estudiante hasta que descubrí que soy excelente en lo que de verdad me apasiona. Gracias a todos animarme a encontrarme en estos cuatro años y perdón por apurarlos. Los quiero a todos.

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THE COMMUNITY IS THE GAME

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I. Abstract

La cultura corporativa es un término que ha crecido en los últimos años y se ha convertido en los cimientos de los espacios de trabajo modernos. Compañías que son consideradas como los mejores lugares de trabajo para la generación millennial, tienen en común estas características tal y como una estructura estable alrededor de los valores y sobre todo una comunicación que logre generar *engagement* no solo con su comunidad, sino también con sus empleados. La cultura corporativa es un término que ha cogido fuerza en los últimos años a pesar de que la primera vez que se ha utilizado este término fue el 1951 por el Dr. Elliot Jaques, sin embargo, su popularidad tomó fuerza cuando las compañías empezaron a buscar su *Why* (¿Por qué?), un término acuñado por Simon Sinek bajo su teoría del Círculo Dorado, ayudando a las empresas a encontrar un sentido más profundo para encontrar el porqué hacen lo que hacen. Esta propuesta muestra como una compañía debe manejar el lado de comunicación corporativa por medio de su comunicación, a través de analizar a profundidad de una desarrolladora de video juegos americana, Riot Games. Este proyecto va a estar respaldado por la Teoría Práctica de las Motivaciones, creada por José Antonio Pérez López y desarrollado como una aplicación práctica por el Ph.D. Diego Alejandro Jaramillo. Además, está apoyado por investigaciones a empleados de la compañía como John D. Gutiérrez, Senior Sound Designer en Riot Games y Dan Sutton, Director de Manejo de marca por Riot Games. Ambas entrevistas nos ayudan a ver una perspectiva desde adentro de la compañía de como manejan sus comunicaciones internamente y como hacen para impregnarla dentro de sus empleados.

Palabras Clave: Cultura Corporativa, Engagement, Comunicación, Circulo Dorado

Abstract

Corporate culture is a term that has gained popularity in the past years and is now one of the foundations for modern workspaces. Companies that are considered the best workplaces for the millennial generation have common characteristics such as a stable structure surrounding values, and communications that generate engagement not only with their community but with their employees as well. The corporate culture concept was first used by Dr. Elliott Jaques in 1951; it's popularity became higher when companies were looking for the "Why", expression used by Simon Sinek in the Golden Circle, helping companies focus on the more meaningful side of their businesses.

This proposal shows how a company is supposed to manage their organizational culture through internal communications and it is based on the example of the American video game developer and e-sports tournaments organizer, Riot Games. It is going to be supported by the Practical Application of the Theory of Motivations, a theory created by Professor José Antonio Pérez López and developed as a practical application by Ph.D. Diego Alejandro Jaramillo. The research uses a qualitative method, composed of a review of Riot Games documents and interviews with Riot Games employees John D. Gutierrez, Senior Sound Designer, and Dan Sutton, Director of Brand Management. Both interviews helped see the inside view of how Riot Games manages its communications and corporate culture, and how they managed to infuse it with their employees. In line with the proposed hypothesis that corporate culture is fundamental in the creation of an engaged community, the studied case of Riot Games showed that to create an engaged community, communication strategies must carry the values that the company has.

Key words: Corporate culture, engagement, millennials, e-sports, Golden circle, Insights, Communication.

II. INTRODUCTION:

Communication in companies is often taken for granted, believing that because the business has a great exterior, everything will be perfect on the inside. But communication goes beyond design; communication helps build a brand by building a strong sense of community that will help create a higher rate of engagement and creating corporate values that will make the company strive for common goals as a whole. In order to build strong communication, they need to have structured business models for the company. This thesis will be a deep study of how corporate communications should be approached by the usage of business tools, made in order to discover the deeper core of the company. Some of the instruments that will be used are Business Model Canvas, Golden Circle and the Practical Application of the Theory of Motivations. They will be applied to the case of Riot Games. Through some interviews with the company's employees and deep investigation on how the business behaves, a diagnosis of the company's corporate culture will be made, as well as a proposal for an update that takes community engagement and communication into account.

Through a communications proposal, this research will demonstrate the stages a company has to go through to apply a good communications approach in their company, from a Business Model Canva to the Practical Application of the Theory of Motivations. These tools will help structure the communications strategies of any company and enhance their culture, a crucial factor to create engagement, that will lead to better results and a community that is more loyal to any product the company has to offer. We focus this proposal on a video games company, because their community's engagement and support is one of the most important assets to maintain: without a strong sense of community, video games would not be as successful as they are and their merchandising would not be sold.

Fandoms are important in every creative aspect of a business and most of the time they play an important role in the side of transmedia communications. According to the Oxford Dictionary a Fandom is "*the fans of a particular person, team, fictional series,*

etc. regarded collectively as a community or subculture. In the case of League of Legends, created by Riot Games, their fans are referred to as their players and they play one of the most important roles, according to the company. Riot Games takes their fans into consideration before taking any great decision and every marketing settlement for potential advertising is also shown to them. “*The community is the game*” is not only the name of this project but it is also a quote that Marc Merrill, co-creator of Riot Games, mentioned in the documentary “League of Legends: Origins”.

This investigation was driven by some interviews with employees from Riot Games, in which the main goal was to dig deeper into their experience and perspective on what the company does, and to see if they do “practice everything they preach”. As it is shown on their website, their gamers and employees are one of Riot Games’ top priorities. The company prides itself on Those traits are transmitted to every person that works at the company and are presented through their values. Values that are shown in everything they do, from office work to launching new projects.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

One of the struggles companies are facing nowadays is that they do not know how to create an engaged community, not only with their customers but with their employees as well. To investigate the problem, we took Riot Games, an American video game developer and esports tournaments organizer, as the main example of why this is a company model that people should follow when working on creating a business' corporate culture. Riot is a perfect example of how corporate culture can be imprinted not only to employees but also to players in order to create the brand loyalty that business owners desire.

The main objective of this research paper is to design a marketing communications proposal, supported by the Practical Application of the Theory of Motivations; this theory was created by Professor José Antonio Pérez López and developed as a Practical Application by Ph.D. Diego Alejandro Jaramillo. It will help to enhance the corporate culture, based on the way that Riot Games generates loyalty with their employees and consumers. The Practical Application of the Theory of Motivations was presented in the research paper named: *Innovation in Corporate Organizational Culture: Diversity, Motivation and Organizational Pressure as Possible Realities*, written by Ph.D. Diego Alejandro Jaramillo, Ph.D. Daniel López and Ph.D. Daniel Susaeta.

This research is going to be presented as a communications proposal in which it is going to take Riot Games as a case in order to apply said examples. Using the Golden Circle by Simon Sinek, the Business Model Canvas created by Alexander Osterwalder and the Practical Application of the Theory of Motivations by Professor José Antonio Pérez López and Ph.D. Diego Alejandro Jaramillo.

1.1. Theory of Motivation and Corporate Culture

As it is quoted by Professor Pérez López: “*By learning, we intend those changes that occur within the agents as a result of the interaction itself, provided that such changes will influence the next generation*”. The Practical Application of the Theory of Motivations can be used when adapting the culture that a company promotes, this is used most commonly at the moment when the company is making any transcendent

decisions. The following table is based on the theory of Antonio Pérez López, IESE professor, proposed as a practical application by Diego Alejandro Jaramillo, professor at IDE Business School in the area of people management.

Table 1. Practical Application of the Theory of Motivations

Model	Motivation	Leadership	Communication	Change	Learning	Strategy	Innovation
Mechanic	Extrinsic	Autocratic	Falling	Drastic	Null	Operative	Constant improvement
Psychological Organic	Intrinsic	Consensus	Descending and Ascending	Foretold	Technical	Conventional Prospective	Closed to Radical
Anthropological	Transcendent	Assertive	Multidirectional	Continuous	Technical Formative	Disruptive / Culture Organizational	Open to Disruptive

Chart made by the author from an adaptation of the model and types of motivations of Pérez López.

Jaramillo, D. A., & López, D. F. (2019, April 4).

Source: Investigación- Universidad de Los Hemisferios

Speaking of an organization that addresses innovation means a change in its culture, which is the most complicated change that exists. And it is not just a glimpse of the future, something we can plan, but not predict; It is fundamental to understand that change is a process that must be analyzed carefully, and that before launching into what could be an imminent failure, we must analyze all the possibilities that this implies. The first thing is to understand the type of organization that we are (*Jaramillo, D. A., & López, D. F, 2009*)

Human beings need to be in a constant state of innovation and motivation to perform better at their activities. All the environment and changes they are constantly exposed to, will somehow affect their performance at their jobs. As presented in the table developed by Pérez López and Jaramillo Arango, any decision we make will determine the strategy and innovation that has to be used along the process. The model does not exactly work in a straight line, and it can be changed depending on the strategy or the stage the company is at, but it must be gradual and without skipping any part of the process in order to guarantee the success of it.

Depending on the objective, each company has the model, motivation, leadership, communication, learning, strategy and innovation that will change. When planning a strategy around the needs of the company, the use of the Practical Application of the Theory of Motivations will show how each situation should be managed. Without any motivation to individuals, the innovation process tends to fail and will probably not be able to achieve the desired goal. This is mainly used to determine how the company will behave in case of a communicational crisis.

The first step is to determine in which of the rows of the table the collaborator is identified. This will tell us if we should apply a drastic, planned or continuous change. That decision also brings us to the type of strategy and innovation that we must use in this process. You can make an organization move from one model to another, but it must be gradual, without skipping a model. In some cases, moving from one model to another requires planning and strategy, with specific objectives. For example, if I need an imminent change (i.e. drastic) because I foresee a crisis, or we must change the culture for some reason, then we move on the Mechanical Model, we dismiss some people, we generate a descending communication, without the right to reply; and then, once the objective has been achieved, we return to the previous model. It is risky, hard, and even cruel, but it works in environments where people are governed under the control and pressure of supervision (Lopez, P. Jaramillo, DA. 2019)

Corporate culture is the behavior and beliefs that represent how a company interacts and operates its business exchanges. Most of the time, this is something that is developed organically rather than being implied in the company rules. The definition of corporate culture has many versions. For example, Ralph H. Kilmann stated it as a “shared philosophy, ideology, value, assumption, beliefs, hope, behavior and norms that bound the organization together” (Kilmann, H. 2019)

To understand corporate culture, we need to go back to its roots in the early 1960s, where awareness of corporate or organizational culture in business and other organizations emerged. Corporate culture was a term used by academics to describe the character of a company. According to Evan Tarver:

Corporate culture was used during those periods by managers, sociologists, and other academics to describe the character of a company. This included generalized beliefs and behaviors, company-wide value systems, management strategies, employee communication and relations, work environment, and attitude. Corporate culture would go on to include company origin myths via charismatic chief executive officers (CEOs), as well as visual symbols such as logos and trademarks.

By 2015, corporate culture was not only created by the founders, management, and employees of a company, but was also influenced by national cultures and traditions, economic trends, international trade, company size, and products (Tarver, E. 2020)

Nowadays, to have an established and well-defined corporate culture is one of the key elements to engage your audience, and proves that the company has established core values. When talking about engagement, this is a strategy that helps people become more involved with the company; one that, over time, will help create a meaningful and more interactive community. Through engagement, we establish the customer's loyalty and have the brand or product on top of their minds. The definition of engagement according to the IAB (International Advertising Bureau) is “*a spectrum of consumer advertising activities and experiences- cognitive, emotional, and physical- that will have a positive impact on a brand*”. When it comes to marketing, customer engagement represents a strategy for generating a better and more efficient corporate performance in sales and growth. This has given a whole new turn to marketing and new companies.

But in order to be able to create a successful corporate culture, one of the first things that has to be defined is the why of the company. This is something that is stated in the Golden Circle by Simon Sinek. This is a concept that is used to ground the principles of decision making by mapping how the human brain works and will improve leadership, corporate culture, hiring, product development, sales and marketing. Simon Sinek is an American author and creator of the Golden Circle which was first introduced in his book *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*. This concept is made to help find the purpose and core beliefs. This concept is presented in the form of a bullseye, which from the inside out helps you know the What, How and Why.

Graphic 2. Golden Circle



Sinek, S. (2009).

Source: TED

As Sinek mentioned in one of his Ted talks, the core of the Golden Circle is that *“People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it”*. Companies tend to not know their why, and if they do not know their why, how can it be expected that people be loyal to us. That is one of the principal reasons why when we talk about corporate culture, we need to know our why, because it is the essence of the company and the reason of being.

This concept ensures success because it will allow us to see immediate results and lets us build an engaged community around it. When you have this engagement, your customers defend the company and look forward to everything they do because they feel it as their property. The value proposition becomes transcendent and the community keeps on feeling identified and finds personal motives to be part of the institution. They are there to support them no matter what and celebrate their success as its own.

Integrated Marketing Communications and Corporate Culture are both important in order to manage their brand and determine the perception they want consumers to have. *“Integrated Marketing Communications is an approach to promote a message through multiple strategies that work together and reinforce one another. These strategies have*

proven to be reliable because they are fusing modern and traditional marketing.” When we have a successful approach, IMC will help enhance the brand message into a whole, so all the marketing strategies are not disjointed and confusing for any potential client.

1.2 Riot Games

1.2.1.The impact of Riot Games and the World Championship

For almost a decade, League of Legends has been on the list as one of the most played games in the world: 1.4 % of the world’s population plays this game, that is almost 1 out of 68 people play League of Legends. This game was created by Riot Games.

Riot Games is an American video game developer, publisher, and esports tournament organizer based in Los Angeles, California. This company was founded by two roommates from the University of Southern California, Brandon Beck and Marc Merrill in 2006. Riot Games is best known for League of Legends, a multiplayer online battle arena game, and the company’s main product. This game was released in October 2009 and became the PC game with the highest active player count by 2013.

When Beck and Merrill came up with the idea of developing League of Legends, it was because as regular video game users, they had complaints or ideas that might help game developers. A lot of gaming companies were not focused on gamers that wanted to spend thousands of hours playing the game. They both felt that the video game developers of the time did not care about the feedback gamers had to offer. Beck and Merrill mentioned in the “League of Legends: Origins” documentary that developers move from game to game too quickly, leaving their passionate communities behind and not thinking about the players that wanted to spend thousands of hours in it. While still in the USC dorms, they decided to create an idea for the company that had the community as the center. They sought investors and raised about 1.5 million American dollars to launch Riot Games, and then recruited well-known developers to make the idea of the video game a reality. From North America to Europe and even Asia, they conquered the market of video game tournaments.

The League of Legends World Championship is the annual professional tournament hosted by Riot Games. The first season took place in Jönköping, Sweden in 2011 and it was called the Dream Hack Summer and the prize was 100,00 euros. They witnessed that people were fans of seeing other people play the game and saw an engaged community around Esports. The things gamers loved the most about League of Legends competitions were the matches, strategy, and speed. The biggest thing that makes sports are their spectators, so they decided to make things bigger. Season 2 of the World Championship was the biggest event Los Angeles had in 2012. Due to technical limitations at the time, and a very ambitious event, a game that was supposed to last for 45 minutes ended up lasting for seven hours. They finally decided to shut the event down. Of course, Merrill and Beck decided that they did not want to disappoint their audience and gave them a complete refund of their ticket, 25\$ on Riot points, pizza for everyone, and free merchandise. People saw that night that Riot cared more about their community and less about the money they made. The spectators left the event chanting out for Riot, and that they would still do it next year.

The next step for Riot Games was broadcasting the event. Social media platforms such as Twitch were a hit inside the gaming community, so they decided to give it a try. Broadcasting is generationally relevant and gamers want to watch what they love when they're not playing. This opened a door to a whole new world. The next step they needed to tackle was to coach the tournament players; they were just dragged from their homes and dropped into the arenas, and of course, did not know how to interact with the audience or the interviewers. They became pro players and celebrities over night and did not get the concept of good interviews and engagement.

As fans know, sports are games that are all about the moments, so they started teaching the gamers how to interact with the audience. People were amazed by esports; even the professional NBA player Rick Fox bought a League of Legends team. When he was asked about his decision he said: "Professional digital athletes" became a business for "traditional sports athletes". Esports is here to stay, and with the easy accessibility to the content, people keep getting more and more excited about these tournaments. So far, they've had ten World Championships. In 2014 there were 45,000 attendants to the World Championship in Seoul, Korea. It featured 16 teams competing for a \$2.13 million-dollar prize pool. It took place at the Seoul World Cup Stadium where South Korean team

Samsung Galaxy White beat the Chinese team Star Horn Royal Club, becoming the 2014 League of Legends world champions.

1.2.2. General Statistics

The following are some statistics about League of Legends and the company, Riot Games. In a general overview approximately 22 million people across 145 countries play League of Legends every day. The typical LoL player spends an average of 160 billion hours playing the game. And to make it global, approximately 1% of the world population plays the game.

According to Esports Charts on the League of Legends World Championship in 2019 some of the general statistics they show about Riot Games says that the company is an Organizer. With a total prize pool is of \$26 428 million USD. The peak viewers of the event online are of 3 985 million viewers, the total of hours watched was of 1 198 billion and the airtime of the contest was on 13 899 hours.

Table 3. Esports Charts data

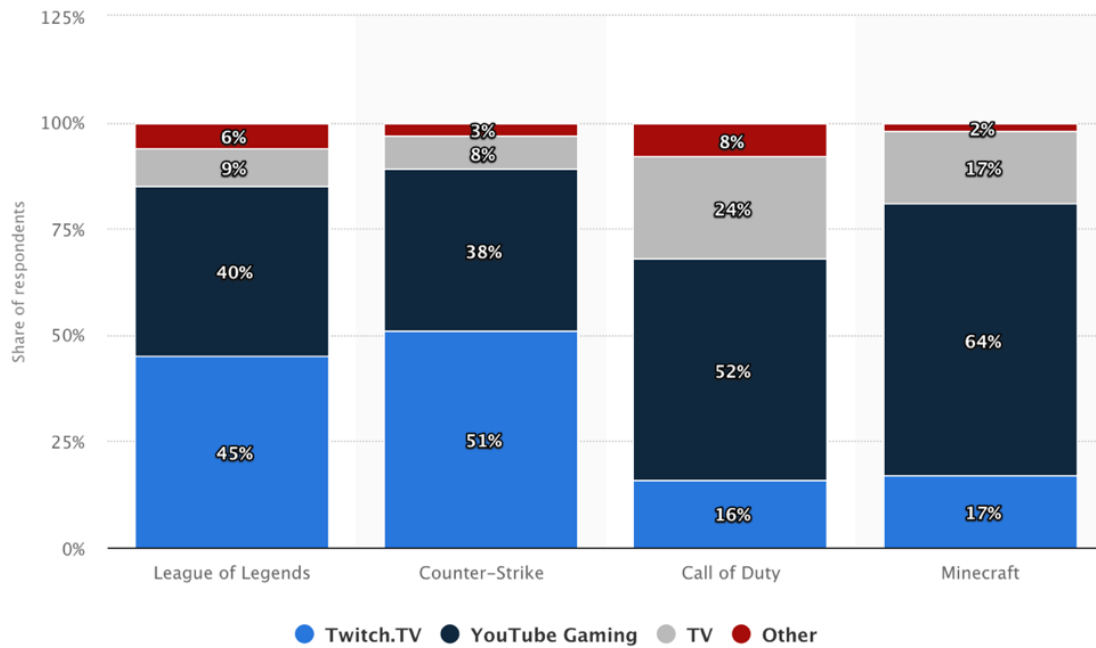
Type	Total prize pool	Peak viewers	Hours watched	Airtime
Organizer	\$26 428 697	3 985 787 viewers	1 198 842 615 hours	13 899 hours

Esports Charts League of Legends (LoL) Tournaments Statistics (2019)

Source: Esports Charts

According to Statista, which reports on the distribution of eSports viewership among selected eSports games fans worldwide as of May 2017, League of Legends is one of the most viewed online games on Twitch, an online gaming streaming service. The graph shows League of Legends in comparison to other multiplayer online games such as Counter-Strike, Call of Duty and Minecraft.

Table 4. Statista data

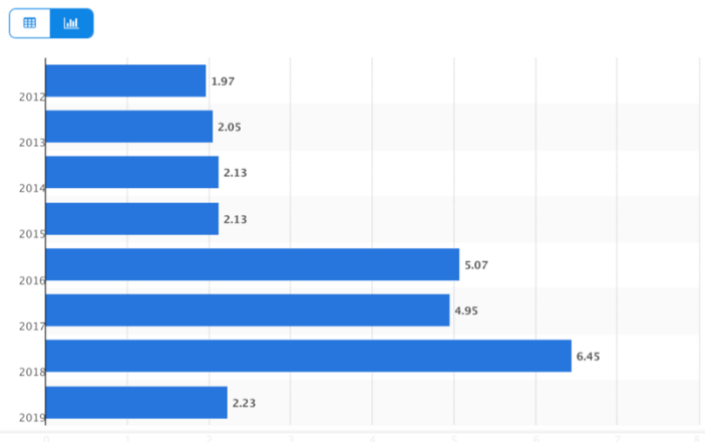


Source: Statista

As previously mentioned, League of Legends’ World Championship was the pioneer in North America when it came to eSports. The prize pool grew as it became more and more popular. The following graph shows the League of Legends World Championship’s prize pool from 2012 to 2019:

Table 5. Statista data

League of Legends World Championships prize pool from 2012 to 2019
(in million U.S. dollars)



Source: Statista

The data recollected about League of Legends’ role in Esports shows that the World Championship prize pool in 2019 was \$2.23 million USD. The total number of viewers of League of Legends World Championship in 2018 was of 99.6 million. The reach of League of Legends among the Esports viewers worldwide in 2017 was about 32%. The percentage of the League of Legends community watching esports content via Twitch in 2017 was about 45%.

Table 6. eSports Insider:

LOL IN ESPORTS	
LoL World Championship prize pool in 2019	2.23mn USD
Number of viewers of LoL World Championship in 2018	99.6mn
Reach of LoL among eSports viewers worldwide in 2017	32%
Share of LoL fans watching eSports content via Twitch in 2017	45%

Source: eSports Insider

According to Adam Fitch from the website eSports insider:

The report states that over 53,000 fans attended the finals of both the spring and summer splits and the weekly studio matches, with \$5.44 million (£4,097,163.20) being contributed to the local economy of Detroit alone through the LCS Summer finals. It’s also stated that the LCS was the third most popular professional sports league among 18-34 year-olds in the United States.

The Spring finals had a total of 2.4 million hours watched, with a peak concurrent viewership of 609,000 and an average concurrent viewership of 433,000 – according to Nielsen (Fitch, A. 2019)

1.2.3. The importance of Riot culture

Through a series of relevant questions, we've had some findings that are crucial to develop a communications proposal based on the study case of Riot Games. As mentioned previously, the company has their culture as one of its main priorities. From their new employees to every single player, they try to make sure everyone works closely with one another, informing and supporting each other's work. As it is mentioned on their website, they're focused on two big work streams to make Riot a great home for people who love making games: setting a high bar for diversity and inclusion (D&I), and fostering a fair, collaborative, high-performing culture. They make sure everyone follows and understands their beliefs, and even suggest that if they ever fall short of making those beliefs become a reality, people should not be afraid to call them out. As stated on their web page, some of their beliefs are:

- That when teams are both diverse and inclusive, they win. Every time.
- That leveraging our strengths, knowing our weaknesses, and being honest about it is the way to succeed, whether in the office or in a game.
- That we must call out sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, ageism, religious discrimination, and bigotry of all kinds.
- That work can be a place where you make lifelong friends, partner with clutch teammates, and embrace the joy of making games.

These beliefs help them surface the best ideas, challenge the status quo, and ultimately make better games.

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to dig deeper into the research of what a community is and how Riot manages it, the methodology that is going to be used are interviews with “rioters”, investigation on the website of the company and interviews online. The interviews are meant to explain deeper concepts or the perspective from someone that works at Riot Games. For this project, the interviewed employee is Dan Sutton, director of brand management, from his point of view when it comes to branding, corporate culture and creation of a sense of community. Then, another method used to investigate was the Netflix documentary called “League of Legends: Origins”, in which they talk about the early stages of the company, how eSports tournaments work and contain testimonies from the CEO and other important employees for the company. And lastly, the Riot Games website, which contains important information regarding different areas, news about the games as well as an in depth explanation of every area of the company, including their corporate values.

These methods will help get a deeper perspective on how the company operates and will help shape the proposal for how every company can apply and adapt the tools shown for their own companies. This will not only help with the other books that were read, but will provide a better understanding of Riot’s inner dynamics with their employees and as a company.

3. FINDINGS

As the main form of research for this thesis, I interviewed employees from Riot Games to get an insight from an employee's perspective. The interview was with Dan Sutton, Director of Brand Management at Riot Games. The interview was about his perspective, management and usage of the company's identity, to be able to prove (or disprove) my hypothesis.

The first finding I could perceive was that even though Riot does not have a stated "corporate culture" per se, they do have some values that they try to impregnate in every employee. Some of the values they transmit in every single area of the company are: Player experience first, dare to dream, thrive together, execute with excellence, and stay hungry; stay humble. These values are shown on Riot's website under the Our Values tag.

Dan Sutton mentioned that in Riot they were too afraid to do branding and that they are mainly focused on the branding of League of Legends. Basically, what Riot does is that they manage every game as it's own company with its own branding, own advertising and own team working permanently on the game's brand. My perception is that this happens because Riot Games was bought by the Chinese company Tencent in 2015 and, with 24 offices around the world, it's hard to transmit a corporate culture that is different to the actual owner's culture, which is Tencent. Sutton mentioned that Riot has freedom when it comes to creativity, but still has to seek Tencent's approval. He mentioned that Tencent has had many media scandals dragging Riot with them, but they have noticed that what they have to do is "Don't avoid it, don't defend it. Just address it". They need to show that even though things can get out of control, the brand is still owned by the community.

Sutton mentioned that Riot does not like to use the word "brand", and when they talk about the company's identity, what they look for is to deliver the best product possible. They want to make a better product, so that their community can become better players. As Brandon Beck said in the documentary League of Legends: Origins, "The community is the game", they make constant focus groups to receive feedback from the game leaders and test their marketing campaigns on hardcore players. They look for the

most important voices to look for honest feedback. The social media platform they seek for feedback is mainly on Reddit, where they can see what the players' response is. They do not want to correct the people on the internet, but they do want honest responses and learn from it. They want the players to be the messengers. They want players to know the changes in a direct, transparent and honest way. The Riot brand is owned by the community. They let their own players make the ads because people are more likely to watch them. They want authentic voices to be the ones communicating to their community.

Dan Sutton said that, from his perspective, one of the main attributes Riot tries to communicate to its culture is to be fair about diversity. That is why they created the Diversity and Inclusion Council, putting themselves in the players' perspective. They wanted for the "communities inside the community" to feel seen, and to avoid problems concerning race, hate towards the LGBTQ community and of course, being socially responsible.

Sutton feels that Riot still has a lot of work to do when it comes to social responsibility topics, mentioning that there are not as many women working in this field and that it is one of the issues they get called out about the most. As an LA based company, they feel that they are failing to notice problems that are relevant in other companies. He says that, to improve, they have to become more locally relevant. He also mentioned that the main problem he sees is that they "whitewash" the company, only focusing on Los Angeles and not focusing beyond their home country. He mentioned that most of the time they only use American gamers on their ads and designs that are posted on social media. He wants to practice more the diversity they always preach about and act more local. By being local and involved with the community, they expect to have an improved local activation and become more relevant within. He mentioned that when he visited Brazil, rioters were excited to have offices in Brazil, even though the ads were not relevant enough. That is where he mentioned that they are failing, in not giving them enough ways to participate and get involved in their community.

In summary, even though I thought that Riot did not have a corporate culture, we can see that probably Dan Sutton did not use the right term. I think that the values that they mention all over their web and social media are the main structure for their corporate culture. Something I could perceive about Riot is that they don't look at all the things

they do well, they pay more attention to the things they can work on. I found it very surprising, because we can now see that a company that looks at all the things they do “wrong” rather than all the things they’re amazing at, pay more attention to detail, and work harder to achieve such desired goals.

This interview helped me see the perspective of one of the directors of the company, that not only has worked for Riot, but also for worldwide known companies like Apple and Google, that are recognized and set an example for corporate culture and brand awareness. Riot still has a lot of work to do when it comes to its personal branding, but as Dan Sutton mentioned, it is one of their desired goals to accomplish in the next 24 months. They want to transform their whole brand, so it can be more relevant and a pioneer when it comes to virtual brands, virtual reality and top user experience.

4. PROPOSAL

Communications are one of the most important parts of a company. It not only helps you communicate with the desired audience, it is also capable of creating a community so engaged with everything the company does, that it will interact with and buy any product. In order to create a communication system that will produce results and create a broader audience, companies have to analyze in depth the company attributes that will define how the business should behave and how they should present themselves to their public.

In the following communications proposal, businesses will learn how to deconstruct their company and create strategies in order to create successful communications. This proposal is going to be supported by the example of Riot Games, an American videogame developer and e-sports tournament organizer. Through interviews with some employees and a deep investigation of the company culture and values, this proposal will show how a technological company, that is also named as one of the best workplaces for millennials, manages communications that as a result creates one of the most engaged communities in the gaming industry.

By the implementation of strategies, every desired company will figure out that , in order to be successful, they need to know the deep core of the business. Exercises such as a Brand Key Vision or a Business Model Canva will help understand company behavior and how it is supposed to transmit its values. This proposal is going to be supported by The Practical Application of the Theory of Motivations, which defines some aspects of how the company should communicate and behave.

When it comes to Diversity & Inclusion, they try to make the experience as fair and secure as possible for everyone. When interviewing Dan Sutton, Director of Brand Management at Riot, he mentioned that the gaming industry is mainly a male dominated field and they have been called out several times because of this. On their website, they call out sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, ageism, religious discrimination and bigotry of all kinds. After facing several problems with hate related crimes on the League of Legends gaming platform, they created an honesty board with the main purpose of creating a safer environment for players. Even though this was a recurring problem, they did not

want to reprimand the players themselves; so with the honesty board, the own players judge other behavior and decide whether they can still play or not.

When it comes to the Riot culture, they have some values that they try to keep as their main priorities in every single area of the company. On their website, some of the values mentioned are: Player experience first, dare to dream, thrive together, execute with excellence and stay hungry; stay humble. With these values, they create quality controls that will be equal in every area of the company and, thanks to that, will create a high-performance company.

5. CORPORATE CULTURE

Culture has become one of the most important aspects a company should pay attention to. Culture transmits how a business should communicate with their audiences, what they believe in and what they should behave like. Even though this term has gained popularity in the last few years, this concept was first introduced in 1951 in *The Changing Culture of a Factory*, a book written by Edgar H. Schein. He mentions that the organizational culture is the way people interact with the context within them and this includes the organization's vision, values, norms, systems, symbols, language, assumptions, environment, location, beliefs and habits (Schein, E. 1951).

In the case of Riot Games, their “Riot Culture” is divided into three work streams such as Strong Leadership, Systems & Processes and Education & Recognition. This shows that when people understand and believe in what you preach, this will help you embrace every change and product the company launches, and as result, to generate a more engaged community. When a community is engaged, they will believe in every product that is launched and every decision made is going to be supported. Engagement is one of the most crucial factors now a days when talking about transmedia communications, because an engaged community will work with beyond what is given, for example creating fan videos of a moment they want to reminiscence, fan fictions of characters taking them out of their regular environment and cosplayers dressing up as their favorite character for fan events or just for pure entertainment. Some companies such as Riot are all about their culture mixed with their transmedia;

they organize fan events and even design merchandise based on some of the characters.

League of Legends is a game that is free to download and free to play. They were looking to monetize it but thought it would be unfair to ask players to pay to improve the qualities of their character, because players with more money could improve theirs with more weapons and, as a result, win because they could afford it. This is what is known in the industry as Pay to Win. Nowadays, Riot charges only to customize characters, and people do it because they are so invested in playing the game for long periods of time that what they would love the most is to make their characters as personalized as possible. That is one of Riot's main sources of revenue customizing avatars, discounts in merchandising, esports tournaments tickets and the download of the game's music, which the majority of the time is composed in house unless they invite special artists, such as Imagine Dragons when they were invited to perform the song Warriors in 2014.

5.1 STRATEGIES

When it comes to corporate communications, strategies are one of the key factors in order to make a visible change. It is essential to find what is lacking and what needs improvement before deciding what strategy is going to be used. In this proposal, the strategies that are going to be presented and applied to Riot Games as an example are: Golden Circle, Brand Key Vision, Business Model Canva and Practical Application of the Theory of Motivations. These strategies are great when defining how the business is supposed to behave, communicate and create content, especially in social media. Through the study and applications of the tools, it is guaranteed that the company will be better understood and will have an easier time detecting what is lacking and what needs to be focused on more.

5.1.1 THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE THEORY OF MOTIVATIONS

The practical application of the theory of motivations is mainly used to determine the type of culture the company wants to have and how they wish to communicate. Through deciding which type of model, motivation, leadership, communication, change,

learning, strategy and innovation, the chart presents several combination keys that will help the company determine the way they want to lead their projects.

Model	Motivation	Leadership	Communication	Change	Learning	Strategy	Innovation
Mechanic	Extrinsic	Autocratic	Falling	Drastic	Null	Operative	Constant improvement
Psychological Organic	Intrinsic	Consensus	Descending and Ascending	Foretold	Technical	Conventional Prospective	Closed to Radical
Anthropological	Transcendent	Assertive	Multidirectional	Continuous	Technical Formative	Disruptive / Culture Organizational	Open to Disruptive

Chart made by the author from an adaptation of the model and types of motivations of Pérez López.

Source: Investigación - Universidad de Los Hemisferios

In the case of Riot Games their model is between the anthropological and psychological organic, because they have a deeper connection with their customers that goes beyond video games, one that creates a desire to support them in projects that go far from their product. A good example of this is supporters buying skins for their characters and albums, even though they still have free options. This is also why their motivations are transcendent. People get motivated to go past the video game and buy merchandise, create fan fictions and even dress up as their favorite characters. Their leadership is consensus because they ask for other's opinion and leave behind the pyramidal classic way of leading. Their communication is multidirectional, because they use several platforms and "leaders" to transmit what has to be communicated. Their change is continuous, constantly developing their games and in constant change when it comes to updates and changes. Their learning is technical formative because, in the technology field, they are always forming themselves when it comes to new technologies. Their strategy is disruptive, because they follow the example of what is known as Silicon Valley companies, where they are far from being a traditional company. And their innovation is with constant improvement, showing that they are always innovating and changing their perspectives.

The following chart will show how is Riot Games stated within the cart of the the practical application of the theory of motivations:

Model	Motivation	Leadership	Communication	Change	Learning	Strategy	Innovation
Mechanic	Extrinsic	Autocratic	Falling	Drastic	Null	Operative	Constant improvement
Psychological Organic	Intrinsic	Consensus	Descending and Ascending	Foretold	Technical	Conventional Prospective	Closed to Radical
Anthropological	Transcendent	Assertive	Multidirectional	Continuous	Technical Formative	Disruptive / Culture Organizational	Open to Disruptive

Chart made by the author from an adaptation of the model and types of motivations of Pérez López.

Source: Investigación - Universidad de Los Hemisferios

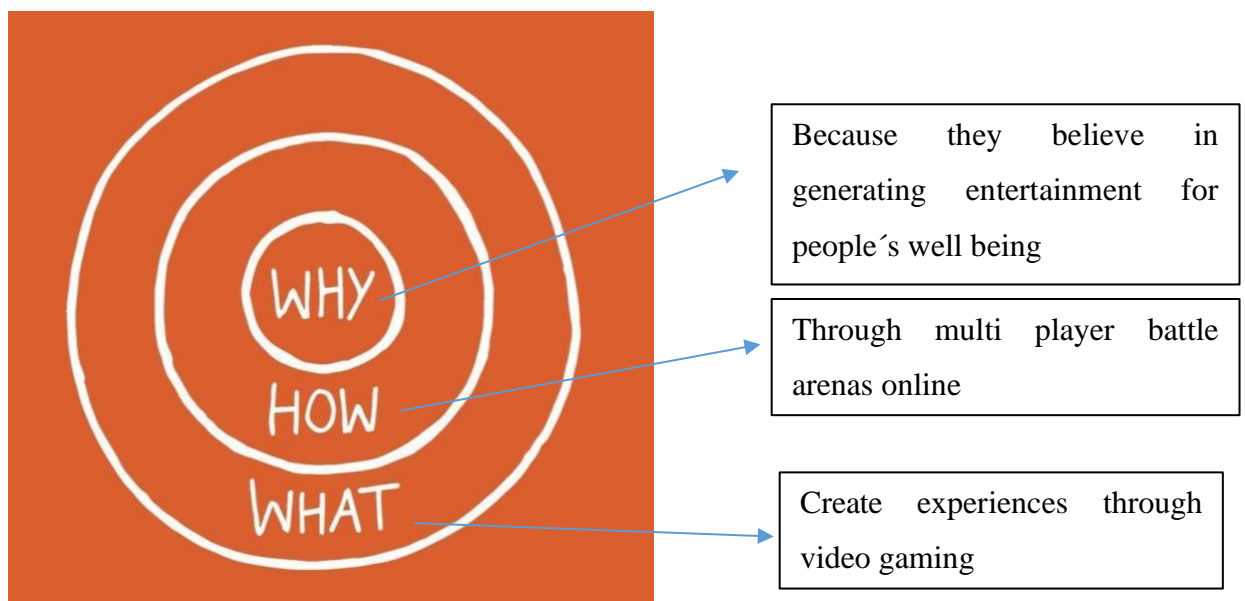
5.1.2 GOLDEN CIRCLE

The Golden Circle is a concept created by Simon Sinek, an American author and motivational speaker, that was first presented in his book *Start with Why: How great leaders inspire everyone to take action*. This concept was made in order to help companies find the reason they do what they do. The Golden Circle is a bullseye that from the center target out has: Why, What, How. Which is, why does one do what they do? The why is one's purpose and the core of the project, what moves you. The how is what is going to be the way to get to the audience, what is going to be the way to get to the why. And the What is basically "about" the company, product or service.

Many companies rather use the Golden Circle as a replacement for the Vision and Mission, because the why is more purposeful and helps to gain a deeper understanding of the core of the company. Simon Sinek mentioned in one of his Ted Talks that the core of the Golden Circle is that *"people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it"*. This concept ensures success because it will allow us to see immediate results and lets us build an engaged community around it. When you have this engagement, your customers defend the company and look forward to everything they do because they feel it as their property. The value proposition becomes transcendent and the community keeps on

feeling identified and finds personal motives to be part of the institution. They are there to support them no matter what and celebrate their success as its own.

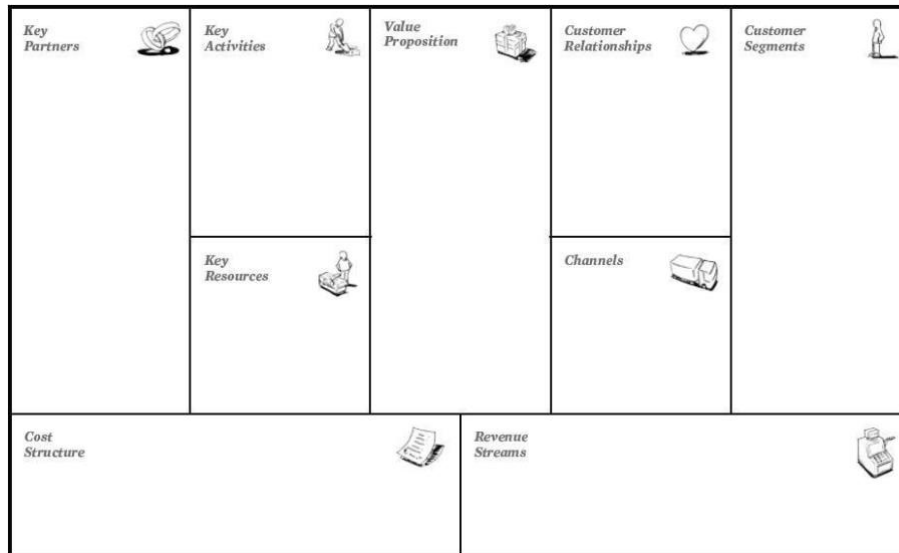
In order to better understand how to apply the Golden Circle properly, we will explore the way this tool is applied in the case of Riot Games. Let's begin with the What. What Riot Games does is create experiences through video gaming. How do they do it? Through multiplayer battle arenas online. And Why do they do it? Because they believe in generating entertainment for people's well-being.



5.1.3 BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS

The Business Model Canvas is a tool used to identify the key aspects of a company, mostly used for strategic management. This is mostly used for developing new or documenting existing business models. This tool was first proposed by Alexander Osterwalder and it was first presented in the book *Business Model Ontology*. As mentioned on his bestselling book *Business Model Generation*, "*this model reflects*

systematically on your business model, so people can focus the business model segment by segment”¹.

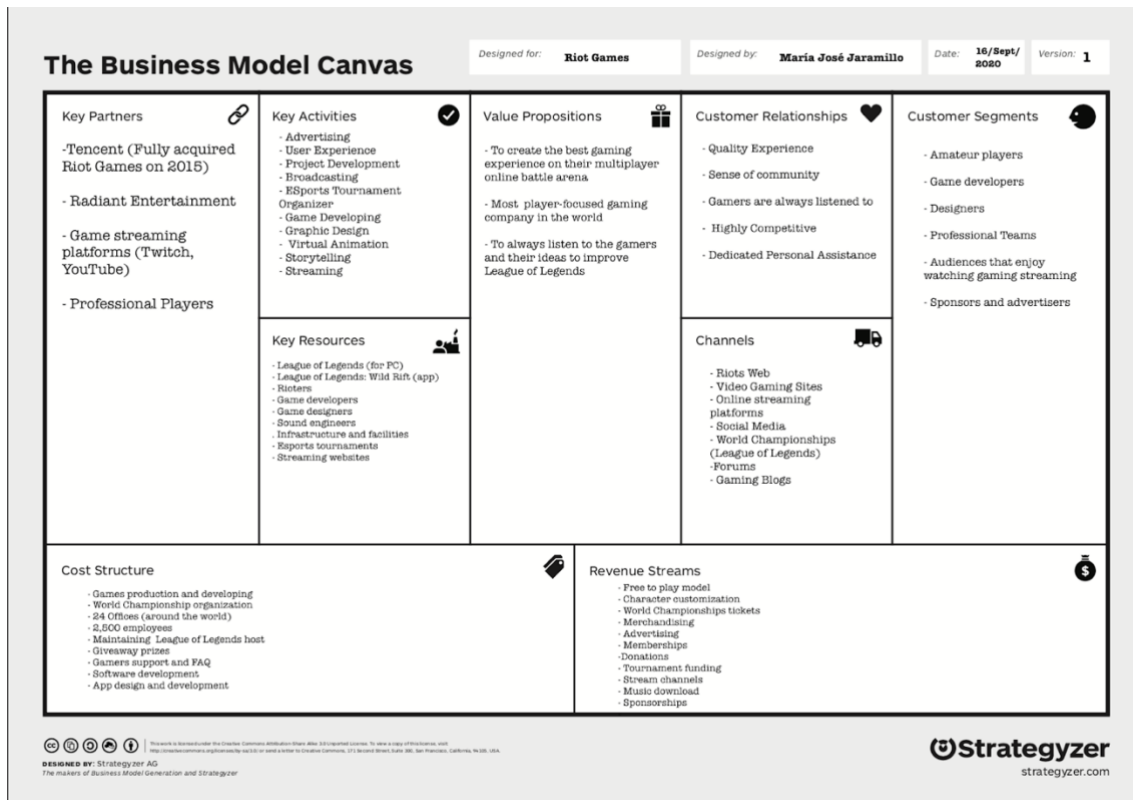


Osterwalder, A. (2010)

Source: Business Models INC

As is shown on the Business Model Canvas, this is divided into 9 segments that are key partners, key activities, value proposition, customer relationship, key resource, distribution channel, cost structure and revenue stream. Every aspect is a key factor at the moment of taking decisions and in being able to identify what is part of the process of said business.

¹ Osterwalder, A. (2010)



Osterwald, A (2010) and developed by Jaramillo, MJ. (2020)

This is the Riot Games' Business Model Canvas that is going to be developed for further understanding of the proposal process.

Going through every column of the Business Model Canvas, beginning with the Key Partners should be filled in with whoever are the key partners and suppliers. In the case of Riot Games, they are: Tencent, the Chinese company that fully acquired Riot in 2018; Radiant entertainment, who is a third party that helps Riot provide service for an entire continent; game streaming platforms such as Twitch or YouTube, where the biggest demonstrations for the gamers are shown and where the community expands; and professional players, who not only attend the esports competitions, but also have big followings and are trend setters in the gaming community.

The Key Activities section looks at what are the most important activities that said project requires. The activities Riot uses to gain more engagement are: advertising, user experience, project development, broadcasting, esports tournament organization, game development, graphic design, visual animation, storytelling and streaming.

The value proposition answers what are the needs that the product answers; in this case, Riot creates the best gaming experiences through their multiplayer online battle arena, and they are always listening to the players and their ideas in order to improve League of Legends.

The customer relationships are how the relationships are expected to be established, which in the case of Riot means quality experience, sense of community, continued feedback from the players, highly competitive and dedicated personal assistance. Channels refers to how one is going to reach the desired audience, which in this case are: Riot Games website, video gaming sites, online streaming platforms, social media, World Championships for the League of Legends game, forums and gaming blogs.

The customer segments section lists the targeted audience the product is meant for which are mostly amateur players, game developers, designers, professional teams, audiences that enjoy watching gaming streaming and sponsors.

On the bottom of the Business Model Canvas, when it comes to cost structure, which is where and when the money is going to be spent, in Riot's case would be games production and development, World Championship organization, maintenance of offices, giveaway prizes, software development and app design.

And finally, we have revenue streams, which shows what are going to be the various incomes that the company has, in this case: character customization, world championship tickets, merchandising, advertising, memberships, donations, tournament funding, stream channels, music download and sponsorships.

As previously shown, the Business Model Canvas helps the company reach inside the structure of the company, shows what they can work on and gives a general overview of how the business is working. Even though this tool is mostly used in startups, to know the core structure of the company helps how the corporate culture should be approached.

This communications proposal helps gain a deeper understanding of the company and focuses on elements than otherwise would not have been noticed. This proposal, by utilizing tools that are mostly used in startups, helps businesses to understand and gain a different perspective on whether what they are doing is going to create the desired engagement or not. If one does not know every single aspect of the company, those results are going to be projected at the end. As Simon Sinek, creator of the Golden Circle

mentioned, *“People do not buy what you do, they buy why you do it”*; consumers want to have more arguments about why they should buy said product and not a similar product from a competitor. Consumers are becoming more knowledgeable and businesses need to give them enough arguments to choose them over the competition. To know the why, the value proposition and the brand essence, will help the company gain a better understanding of what has to be done in order to increase the engagement.

As previously shown, these tools not only help with acquiring knowledge and a deeper understanding of the company, but it also helps shape the perspective on how a company should approach their crowds in order to create a sense of community. Taking Riot’s application of the tools, this proposal will show some elements that are a must in order to create a deeper sense of community:

The first step, and one of the most important ones, is to know your why. As Simon Sinek said: *“People do not buy what you do, they buy why you do it”*. People like Riot Games because they see their values and see that they carry them along every project they do. They care about their employees, the player’s experience and about creating a collaborative culture. The why is what drives the company, what moves it; in the case of Riot, the why is mainly focused on the well-being and entertainment of people. Alongside the why, comes the value proposition, which is what stands the company or product apart from the rest. The value proposition is what moves or calls the people to be part of the community, if the followers believe and trust what the company does, they are most likely to adopt it into their lifestyle.

Another key factor is to involve people or make them want to be part of a community, involving them in big decisions and making them feel like they are being listened to and are being involved in decisions. Riot Games uses fan videos to make their own advertisement, showing them that no matter what they do, they care about their opinion in creative matters. Focus groups are a great tool to see how consumers feel, not only through online reviews but with real interaction and feedback. To be part of a community, it is necessary to feel support from other members of the community, to have similar interests and, above all, to be part of an emotional experience.

The community is the game shows that Riot Games not only cares that their users play the game, they care that people use their platforms as a safe space, where they can freely play, don't feel judged and enjoy quality time with people they have similar

interests with. For a company to be successful at the moment of creating a community, they need to make their platform or product a place that their customers do not fear. As previously mentioned, in order to create a community, people need to feel supported; that is how one can tell that the community is a success, when people want to spend all their free time doing what they love and believe in the project.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can say that by deconstructing Riot Games, we can see how a company, by managing correctly their businesses models, can actually create a corporate culture that can enhance the engagement not only with the customers but with the employees as well. Companies that have a well stated culture are more likely to succeed, and by knowing what they strive for they can accomplish every goal together. Fans also play a huge role in the company; they are the main consumers, the first to point out every imperfection and are part of every big decision made by the company.

The community is clearly the game. Without a strong and passionate following, the game would not be as successful. Most of the companies tend to not involve their customers in their settlements but in comparison to Riot, they even make their “*rioters*” part of the advertisement decisions, which gives them insights from the players perspective. Something that could be noticed when speaking with both Riot employees is that they do not focus on the things they are great at, but actually pay attention to all the things they can improve, making them humbler when they achieve greater things. Even though the idea was to develop an Integrated Marketing Communications manual, to create a proposal seemed the only proper way to transmit values and communication in corporations, and truly focus on techniques that can easily be applied when needed.

One of the things I noticed when doing my research is that Riot pays more attention to the “Riot Values” than to their culture. They try to have their values present in everything they do, from game developing to game distribution and organizing tournaments. Every value is important for them, but the one they mention the most is “Player experience first”; they do everything for and because of their players. Another of my findings was that Riot even uses their players to develop their advertisements, mentioning that the players know exactly what the other players want to see. And also, that every office around the world manages their own advertising; as Dan Sutton claimed, “*we don't want to whitewash the ads*”.

As previously mentioned, Riot Games was acquired by the Chinese corporation Tencent in December 2015, making Riot a third party when delivering League of

Legends. Riot has been involved in several scandals because of decisions made by Tencent without their consent. Problems that have resulted in Riot taking the blame for scandals that were caused by lack of research by their owner. Even though they are owned by Tencent, they are an autonomous company.

Every company has problems in communication that need some kind of solving; nevertheless, understanding a company, its roots and why they do what they do, is what will eventually guarantee success in everything they do. To know how and what your company wants to transmit will not only improve engagement but will also improve every single aspect of the business. Communication is one of the main cores a company has to have in order to begin everything. and Even though there are businesses that do not see this branch of a business to be as important, this research proves that the most successful companies, such as Riot Games, give the needed attention to the communication side of the company and thrive to accomplish more than what it is desired from them.

V. DISCUSSION

It has to be considered that Riot, to enhance their communication side of the company and impregnate into other cultures as they desire, they have to start paying more attention to the transmedia content created by the fans. People that get involved in the characters of the narrative, that decide to go beyond what they are given and create their own content. From cosplays at conventions, writing fanfictions of what their characters would do in alternative universes to even illustrating the game tales.

Most companies tend to ignore the portraits supporters want to present, but it is unseen that they're raising awareness about the game with no other objective than promoting their art. Communication Transmedia has created a safe space for fans to show their support in ways other than the traditional, creating a wider audience full of potential clients and future supporters.

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