

CASE STUDY

AARP

AARP Seizes Online Games as an Opportunity to Drive Site Traffic and Membership Loyalty

With over 39 million members, AARP is the leading nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization for people age 50 and over in the United States. The organization's Web site, <http://www.aarp.org>, which is visited by over 32 million individuals each month, offers extensive information, resources and community features.

Last year executives within the organization began to notice an interesting trend in online games. While many believed that the majority of online gamers were teenage boys glued to a monitor playing video games, statistics began proving that the average age of the online gamer skewed much older. In fact, according to the Casual Games Association, women age 35 years and older are the largest demographic of casual online gamers, making up close to 75% of the market.

Recognizing the relevance of this trend for its organization, AARP turned to Arkadium (<http://www.arkadium.com>) to help conceptualize and launch a game community (<http://games.aarp.org>) for AARP.org site visitors and online members.

Games.AARP.org Becomes the Most Highly Trafficked Area on the Site

The games were launched in February 2008 as part of an overall redesign of the site, and since then traffic has soared. After the launch, traffic shot up to an average of 4.5 million page views, an increase of 294 percent. And more telling of the success is that games as a percentage of overall traffic climbed to about 52 percent of overall traffic to the site.

The screenshot shows the AARP.org website's 'GAMES' section. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for 'HEALTH', 'MONEY', 'LEISURE', 'MAKE A DIFFERENCE', 'FAMILY', 'ONLINE COMMUNITY', and 'MEMBERSHIP'. Below this, there are sub-categories: 'TRAVEL', 'GAMES', 'ENTERTAINMENT', 'FOOD', and 'ACTIVITIES & HOBBIES'. The main content area is titled 'GAMES' and is divided into several sections: 'Browse Games' with a list of game types (Arcade, Card, Strategy, Word, Sports, Multiplayer, All Games); 'Featured Game' showing 'MULTIPLAYER CHECKERS' with a 'PLAY' button; 'Today's Most Popular Games' listing 'Mahjongg Toy Chest' (36174 Times Played), 'Pyramid Solitaire' (17385 Times Played), 'Eggz' (16607 Times Played), and 'Deja Vu Solitaire' (8333 Times Played); and 'Top Gamers' listing 'BobHellam' (Cryptogram, Top Score: 963) and 'ncyiteach'. A 'MEMBERSHIP' banner is visible at the bottom right.

"The online game center not only includes arcade, card, strategy, word and sports games, but also promotes community interaction with leaderboard functionality," said Kenny Rosenblatt, CEO of Arkadium. "We've provided everything from Sudoku and Solitaire to Mahjongg and Backgammon; games that we knew would appeal to a wide range of people and add to the extensive community features that the site already offers."

The most popular games on the site are Mahjongg, Pyramid Solitaire, Eggz and Free Cell Solitaire. All of the casual games on AARP.org are easy to understand and play, and help to drive increased interaction times. The average play time on many of the games that Arkadium included in the AARP.org games Arena is 15 minutes or more. Mahjong alone has an average interaction time of 29 minutes, while Solitaire commands over 20 average minutes of play time.

With all the success, recently AARP.org has also moved to turning their online games and game center into advertising opportunities for brand marketers. Through sponsored advergames and re-branded games, AARP.org is able to customize and repackage popular inventory that is making an impact in terms of reaching this key market where they spend the most time.