

Key 5: Craft Belonging

Consider strategies to enhance player engagement and encourage long-term retention.

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Key 5 Overview

This topic is divided into two learning achievements that you can work toward as you craft belonging:

1. **Assess:** Measure player response to inclusive representation efforts, using player feedback and engagement metrics.
2. **Endurance:** Establish development practices that support lasting, positive shifts for inclusive representation in game content.

Achievement 1: Assess

Measure player response to inclusive representation efforts, using player feedback and engagement metrics.

Introduction

Set annual progress checks. These provide concrete data for leadership, aid in planning, and foster clear direction for and confidence in your team.

Game development is typically a long, multiyear process. Player response may be very different today compared with when your game is complete. For example, what will the social landscape look like when the game is released years from now?

We can't predict the future, but instituting an annual measurement process will help you anticipate these larger directional shifts because it allows you to identify trends and areas where results start to deviate from previous years.

Methods

There are many opportunities to gather player feedback and engagement, both quantitative and qualitative:

- Surveys
- In-game feedback
- Playtesters (as detailed in Key 4)
- Focus groups
- Game analytics
- Community forums
- Public game reviews
- Social media commentary

Questions to Ask

1. Are my measurements valid? Do they measure what they are supposed to?
2. Are my measurements reliable? Will I get the same results using the same measurement procedure?

3. Are my measurements replicable? If someone else conducted this same procedure, would they get the same results?

Take Action

If you have the resources available, combine interpretative frameworks — such as thematic coding — with available software solutions.

- Thematic coding is a common way to analyze qualitative data by finding and sorting through patterns or themes in your findings.
- These resources can help identify conceptual themes within your data:
 - [Atlas.ti](#)
 - [Lumivero](#)

Achievement 1 Complete!

Apply It

Implement regular surveys and analytics to measure player response to inclusive representation, using both qualitative and quantitative data to inform future development decisions.

Achievement 2: Endurance

Establish development practices that support lasting, positive shifts for inclusive representation in game content.

Introduction

In Key 1, we explore how you can approach your game creation with the lenses of self-reflection and intersectionality. Implementing that approach in a way that solidifies lasting shifts in inclusive representation involves self-reflection before, during, and after your game's development.

And remember, we're all in this together. Collaborate with team members and industry partners to show a joint dedication to crafting inclusive content and spaces that promote connection and belonging for players from all backgrounds.

Document.

Keep a detailed record of your thoughts and decisions throughout the development process. This is especially valuable when you revisit this data or if you are trying to trace change over time.

Questions to Ask

- Have I been transparent about my development process?
- Have I reflected upon how my social identity influences my perspective of the world? Also, how does that relate to my team and my company?
- Am I open to other interpretations of my game?
- Have I connected aspects of my game to larger conceptual frameworks related to gender, race, etc.?

Organize your data, reflect again, and communicate.

- Organize and make sense of the data you've collected on identities and narratives in your game. Jot down initial thoughts about patterns, themes, or relationships within the data, which can help guide future analysis.
- Reflect on your own biases, assumptions, and preconceptions. How might particular perspectives influence the interpretation of the data?
- Share your reflections with other members of your team as a means of communicating insights and progress toward more inclusive representation.

Try It: Retrospective Activity (Process Tracing)

Look back at past games and choose specific cases that are relevant to how you would like to understand representation in your game development. Select those that represent a variety of outcomes (including some good examples and some that need to be improved).

- What did or did not go well during that particular game's development?
- What actions and conditions caused that game to be developed well or poorly?
- Can you compare the processes between games that you believe are developed well and games that are not?

Take Action

An industry-wide commitment to prioritizing inclusive design and culture is the path toward gaming becoming a space that truly welcomes all players. You can start by supporting and advocating for internal programs and efforts that emphasize inclusive player engagement and connection.

Facilitate collaboration across teams, publishers, and gaming-related spaces to prioritize creating content and spaces of connection and belonging for all players.



Achievement 2 Complete!

Apply It

Embed inclusive representation as a core value in the development process, incorporating it into project timelines, team training, company values, and your decision-making framework.

You have attained Key 5!