

Mother's Little Helper

Helps her on her way, gets her through her busy day

With the long lag since the last posting (long enough for those swine flu jokes to get a second life), you've probably damn near memorized how to grab guys with "viral" marketing. So, we're going to correct this gender imbalance and de-dude you with back to back postings about what *women* are doing online. We'll see where they're talking, where they're giving and getting advice, and where they're gaming. Yeah, gaming. Of course. Wait, you didn't know that **women are bigger casual gamers than men**? You thought all gamers were pimply, overweight, teenage boys trapped in dark basements reeking of Cheetos and Mountain Dew? Oh boy, let's start here. Of course, that guy *does* exist, but he's preoccupied with elaborate console games like the *Halo* series, with huge production budgets (for the studios), huge time investments (from the players), and huge consumption (of the Slurpees). But if you think that gaming is a man's world, you're missing the broader picture. You're missing the fact that by the time people hit age 30, [65% of women are playing video games](#) as opposed to 35% of men. You're missing a massive marketing opportunity. In a nutshell, you're missing **the world of casual games**.

Let's start with what we mean by "casual games." They have nothing to do with "casual Fridays" or that creepy "casual encounters" section of Craigslist, and everything to do with **quick-to-learn, quick-to-play** diversions that encompass **puzzle, word, strategy, and card games**. Females are actually a slight majority of casual game players, but their bigger commitment becomes clearer when we see that they represent [75% of the casual gamers who pay to play](#) (we hear Mrs. Blagojevich is a fan). These ladies aren't exactly free of commitments either: a recent Roper study found 40% of *new moms* play casual games, presumably since you can play them on three hours of sleep.



If we asked you to close your eyes and picture a gamer... well, you wouldn't be able to read this posting!

But if you're thinking, "Doesn't she have something better to do...like watching her kids?" you're missing the point (although we appreciate your concern). She has a *lot* to do, and between the myriad pressures pulling on her, the poor woman needs a break, if only for a few minutes. In a nutshell, that's what casual games provide: some **mind-flexing, stress-relieving entertainment** that doesn't require much time. They also **don't require much attention**, which comes in handy if little Billy picks up a sharp object and starts chasing the cat around the house. The stress-relieving elements are worth noting, especially in an economy that's causing its fair share of aggravation. While casual gamers always claimed that playing **elevates their moods** and **distracts them from their problems**, recent studies are uncovering more timely applications of "therapeutic gaming." Many players have said that gaming specifically helps them [de-stress from job hunting](#), which explains the [significant spike in casual gameplay \(and revenues!\) during the recession](#). Even for those hanging on to their jobs, [half of working moms](#) (and dads) admit using casual games as quick stress relievers *at work*. Your 401k may have evaporated and your healthcare only covers band-aids, but at least you're in the top 500 on the *Boggle* leaderboard! Traditional gaming stereotypes also undersell the **communal elements** of gaming. Social networks have made it possible to play against an enormous pool of like minded individuals (speaking of which, our deepest condolences on your recent *Farmville* loss – that sheep was a real beaut), while gaming sites from Pogo to Pokerstars feature chat functionality. And look who's talking: [60% of female Pogo.com players chat](#) when playing games, making the whole thing an **inherently social experience**.



Ok, let's get your brand involved! Obviously, you can **run ads in or around pre-existing games**. Or, you can choose to **create your own branded game**. If you go the latter route, keep in mind that you'll be competing against the very popular gaming sites we've introduced in this Posting - we suggest you get some help. Companies like recent Inform-presenters [Fuel Industries](#) have built a variety of engaging, brand-appropriate games for clients just like yours. But since we're all about **engaging consumers**, let's not ignore other ways to bring value to casual gamers. Remember all those women who pay to play these games? A sizable chunk of that cash goes to **microtransactions**, the nominal payments that **unlock extra levels and customized game elements**. Your brand can **offer this content for free** through a sponsorship, or even **sell your own virtual items** if they're appropriate for the given game. And lest you think that all of this brand affinity will be trapped in a personal computer, don't forget that centralized game platforms are increasingly accessible from smartphones and portable game consoles, providing your brand with a nice back-door solution to these channels. So, go and get your game on!

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