

New Opportunities Ahead: Harness the Power of the Curiosity Gap

It seemed like a simple enough idea.

Apply hundreds of elastic bands to a watermelon and wait until the combined pressure forces the bulbous fruit to explode. And while the physics of this April 2016 experiment was fairly elementary, the two BuzzFeed employees who devised it could not have predicted the global reaction it would receive.

At the moment of explosion, more than 800,000 people were watching the experiment on Facebook Live, making it one of the most watched livestreams in history. Since the watermelon exploded, the video has been posted on numerous sites around the world; on Facebook alone, it has been viewed more than 11 million times.

What would cause people to suspend their lives and watch intently for the better part of an hour as a watermelon was slowly and meticulously destroyed? It is a psychological phenomenon called the “curiosity gap,” and is the underlying principle for a new category of instant games.

Curiosity Gap: Defined

The term was first coined by George Loewenstein, an economist and director of the Center for Behavioral Research at Carnegie Mellon University. In a 1994 paper published in the *Psychological Bulletin*, “The Psychology of Curiosity: A Review and Reinterpretation”, Loewenstein argued that curiosity was “a cognitive-induced deprivation that arises from the perception of a gap in knowledge and understanding.” Neuroscience further tells us that satisfying one’s curiosity produces the same stimulation in their brain as

receiving a reward. In other words, the curiosity gap is the difference between what we *already* know, and what we really *want* to know, and bridging that gap results in gratification.

The curiosity gap has already been applied in the lottery industry, inspiring the highly successful *Spin for Cash* instant game concept—first introduced by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation with their game, *The Big \$pin*. While the concept has many variations across jurisdictions, a commonality involves the top prize of a spin on a big prize wheel. The game relies on an underlying principle of deferred excitement—you know you’ve earned a prize within a range, but do not know the exact amount until completing the spin. This delay, along with the heightened anticipation of realizing your final prize, epitomizes the curiosity gap in action.

The Michigan Lottery has seen tremendous success in modeling a version of this concept with their \$10 *The Big \$pin* game. Players of *The Big \$pin* can win a chance to spin a big prize wheel via live-to-tape televised events, which not only creates an extra level of excitement for players but also promotes the game to a wider audience. In this case, both player and viewer share in the curiosity of what the prize will be. *The Big \$pin* game realized remarkable response rates, with between 40% and 50% of eligible non-winning tickets being entered into the draw for a chance at the “big spin.”

Past success with games like *The Big \$pin* has encouraged Pollard Banknote to take the curiosity gap to the next level and develop a simple yet powerful new game category, Progressive Instant Games.

Curiosity Gap: Next Generation

What if we now took the proven curiosity gap concept to help drive sales and boost player engagement and added a progressive jackpot twist to the formula, along with a few other unique features? The result is Progressive Instant Games, where a progressive jackpot concept is carefully blended with the positive power of the curiosity gap. Simply stated, a progressive jackpot is a jackpot that increases each time the game is played without producing a winner.

Progressive jackpots have not been a common feature of instant games but are well-established in other areas of the gaming industry. As noted by the Casino Daily News website, players’ interest and their willingness to play grows each time the unclaimed jackpot grows. Diamond Game, a Pollard Banknote company that provides specialized instant ticket vending machines and services, has capitalized on this growing interest by offering two-thirds of their games in the progressive jackpot format. They also found that allocating a part of a game’s prize structure to a progressive jackpot component helps to boost sales.

Creating a “Storm” of Excitement!

Struck by Luck—Pollard Banknote’s first Progressive Instant Game—shares elements of a classic instant ticket, while also transcending the traditional instant experience with multi-tiered game play made possible through a digital companion app which uses physical and emotional stimuli to encourage player engagement.

Like a classic instant ticket, *Struck by Luck* is purchased at retail and follows the familiar scratch and win format. A player can win an instant cash prize or uncover

SCRATCH	CLICK	ENGAGE	REDEEM
WIN \$ amount or "STORM" prize ("STORM" = guaranteed prize of undisclosed amount)	Check app to reveal "STORM" prize amount or "JACKPOT" win	Receive notifications of nearby winners and possible secondary prizes	"JACKPOT" winners receive amount of progressive at time of redemption

a "Storm" prize symbol representing a guaranteed win of an undisclosed amount (Curiosity Gap #1).

"Storm" prize winners must engage digitally either on the Storm Chaser app or the lottery's website to satisfy their curiosity and discover the special prize: either a specific cash prize or the progressive jackpot. The final amount of the progressive jackpot is not immediately known (Curiosity Gap #2).

As the progressive jackpot increases, the final prize amount could be determined in a couple of different ways, depending on a lottery's preference. For example, the amount could be decided at the time of ticket validation (with the player making the decision as to exactly when to claim his/her jackpot prize) or through

a draw. In the former scenario, the risk of waiting to claim the prize is that another player may claim the jackpot in the meantime. Once the jackpot is won, the prize resets to the seeded amount.

All along, player engagement is heightened with push notifications such as "Storm" alerts that show where others have been "struck by luck." These alerts include animated storm clouds and lightning strikes that highlight lucky retailer locations and their various prize validations.

Curiosity Driving New Opportunities

With *Struck by Luck*, the curiosity gap is employed across several stages of the player's entertainment journey. This game play innovation is an exciting

new variation on some of the biggest successes we've seen recently in the industry. It can help lotteries reach a broader, more tech-savvy audience.

By harnessing the power of the curiosity gap and incorporating easy and fun digital elements, *Struck by Luck* delivers an outstanding game that piques interest and creates additional excitement throughout the entire play experience.

Now, about that watermelon we mentioned earlier. How many elastic bands did it eventually take to make it explode? A whopping 686. We've now bridged your curiosity gap!