

Digital Lottery and the Player Journey: **CONTENT**



How are iLottery games evolving to appeal to the next generation of online players, drive growth, and retain player loyalty in the face of intense competition from other online gaming options?

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Randy Spielman, Chief Product Officer, North Carolina Education Lottery

PANELISTS:

Brad Cummings, Chief Executive Officer, EQL Games

Alex Green, Vice President Games, ZEAL Network

Mike Lightman, Chief Commercial Officer, Instant Win Gaming (IWG)

Frank Suarez, President & Chief Executive Officer, Connecticut Lottery Corp.

Peter Sullivan, Senior Vice President Lottery, DraftKings

Randy Spielman: When we launched Digital Instant Games at the North Carolina Education Lottery about 15 months ago, it flipped our world—in the

best way possible. We instantly went from being in the lottery business to also being in the content business overnight. A digital game portfolio isn't just about more games introduced at a faster pace, it's about the right games or mix of games that attract and retain specific segments. So thank you all for joining us today to talk about the art and science of developing and Marketing great digital game content. First up, let's get to know our panelists. Pete?

Peter Sullivan: Thanks, Randy. Jackpocket is the largest lottery courier operator in the U.S. There's been some noise lately—not so much about the courier model itself, but about bulk ticket purchases by syndicates. I just want to emphasize that Jackpocket has never been involved in any bulk buying. Some fringe operators exploited automated ticket-processing tech, and that's what allowed the bulk-buying to occur. We've always enforced strict purchase caps for

individual users which completely disables bulk-purchasing from being possible with our product.

Our goal now is to rally the industry around clear, enforceable standards for lottery couriers that reward good actors and kick the bad ones to the curb. Jackpocket was built on a foundation of integrity, transparency, and collaboration with state lotteries. We're here to serve the mission of state lotteries — promoting responsible play, supporting good causes, and earning player trust.

We provide a convenient way for players to order official lottery tickets and we offer an extra digital touchpoint that deepens engagement. Like everyone here, we're constantly learning more about player behavior and how to enhance the player experience.

Brad Cummings: At EQL Games, we're a game development studio first and foremost — with a strong catalog of in-house content

“We live in an age of endless content that has shaped what people expect from everything, including lottery.”

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we're proud of. But we didn't stop there. We took a page from the iGaming playbook and applied the aggregation model to iLottery—making it easy for lotteries to access a whole universe of digital game content, all in one place – the EQL Games iLottery Marketplace.

That approach worked better than we could've hoped. It led us to expand internationally and build partnerships with some stellar game studios like Fennica Gaming and Random State looking for U.S. market access. These collaborations are a win-win-win: they bring fresh innovation to our clients, introduce new audiences to our partners, and allow EQL to keep evolving as a creative hub. At the heart of it, our mission is simple—connect the most innovative game developers around the world to the ever-expanding universe of iLottery operators. We're excited to be a part of the evolution of the Lottery gaming space in the U.S. as technology continues to change and new opportunities arise.

“Yesterday's performance is today's conversation. What worked? What didn't? What did the content do to drive that outcome?”

Alex Green: ZEAL is Germany's largest online lottery operator. In Andreas' keynote, you saw some game highlights from our LOTTO24 site—and that was just the tip of the iceberg. We operate a portfolio of over 300 Instant Games, and the range is growing.

We have set up our own game development studio not just to bulk up our portfolio, but to raise the entertainment and production value of what we offer. There are a lot of factors that shape the overall digital player experience but ultimately, it's the games themselves that make the most difference and inspire players to want to come back again and again.

My role is to grow our player base—and I come at this from a game development background. I cut my teeth at Camelot UK where I oversaw the game portfolio of the UK National Lottery—peaking at £8.4 billion in annual sales. I've seen firsthand just how critical great content is to digital

success. The platform matters. The UX matters. But content is king!

Frank Suarez: I'm proud to say my iLottery journey kicked off about ten years ago when I was at the North Carolina Lottery along with Randy. We were working side by side trying to get digital e-Instants approved—which can feel a bit like pushing a boulder uphill with a toothpick. Before the finish line was crossed, I got the call to head up the DC Lottery and made the leap. D.C. was already live with e-Instants, so I went from lobbying for digital to living in it.

Fast forward to now—I'm CEO of the Connecticut Lottery. We sell draw games online, but e-Instants are still off-limits in Connecticut.

Mike Lightman: At Instant Win Gaming, we've had a laser focus on one thing: e-Instant games. That's our singular mission. We've been at it for twenty years now, starting with the UK National Lottery, who asked us to digitize one of

their instant games. That project set us on a path of nonstop iteration—refining, improving, and pushing the boundaries of what great Digital Instants content can be.

And I really appreciate that we're treating iLottery as two distinct conversations: IT platforms and game content. They're symbiotic, sure—but they're also fundamentally different disciplines. The tech needs to work flawlessly, of course, but if the content doesn't sing, the whole thing falls flat. So I'm all for giving content its own spotlight.

Randy Spielman: That really resonates, Mike. Leading up to our Digital Instants launch in North Carolina, I was completely consumed by the nuts and bolts—tech, operations, logistics. In retail, we didn't think of scratch-offs as “content”. They were tickets. We may have referred to them as “entertainment” but we treated them more like products. The digital world is a whole new mindset. So let's go there—Frank, what exactly is content, and why

do we use that word when we talk about digital games?

F. Suarez: When we talk about “content” in the digital space, we're not just talking about the games themselves. Playing the game may be the main event, but the full player journey is made up of many more steps.

Long before a player even clicks “Play,” they've seen an ad, maybe read a social post, landed on the website, created an account, scrolled through options, figured out how to play—and that's all before the game even starts. And after the game? There's the payout, the exit, maybe a return visit—or maybe not. Every single one of those touchpoints matters. Every second of that experience is “content.”

So when we say “content,” we're reminding ourselves that the game is just one piece of a much larger puzzle. The whole ecosystem—the tutorials, the responsible gaming messages, even the way a page loads or a button lights up—it's all part of what either makes a player come back... or click away. And when you're dealing with digital, every tiny detail, every second of the player's time, has an outsized impact.

Brad Cummings: I've got a game producer with a sense of humor who told me, “You know, ‘content’ comes from the same Latin root as ‘contain’—as in, is everything contained within the game?” And hey, if we really nail it, maybe our content will actually make players feel... content. Wordplay aside, there's a truth there—content isn't just what's in the game, it's how it feels.

Mike Lightman: Exactly. When I hear the word “content,” I don't just think “game.” I think entertainment. And at its core, lottery is entertainment. Calling it content pushes us to think bigger, broader, and more creatively. It encourages us to consider the whole experience, not just the game mechanics.

Like Frank said, content isn't just about play—it's about purpose. It's about brand storytelling, winner promotion, responsible play messaging, beneficiary awareness, tutorials, UX—all of it. Great game content is vital. But it's just one actor on a much bigger stage.

And the beauty of digital is that we can test, tweak, and tailor every aspect of

that stage. We're no longer designing for a general audience — we're customizing for specific player preferences. And we can do it over and over again with speed and precision. That's the magic of content in the digital age.

“We're aiming for a well-balanced portfolio that speaks to the widest possible cross-section of consumers.”

Randy Spielman: Let's shift gears. Pete — how are iLottery games evolving to drive growth and connect with the next generation of players?

Peter Sullivan: We live in an age of endless content that has shaped what people expect from everything, including lottery. The bar is higher now. Players want more than just access to the traditional lottery games that were available at retail. They want fresh and new, and they want a full-blown experience.

So we've been asking ourselves: what would a digital-first draw game look like? Not just a digital version of a retail draw game, but something that feels native to the medium. We're currently testing a sweepstakes product that was loosely inspired by a mobile trivia app. You might remember it, the live-hosted national trivia game that went viral a few years ago. We've taken that concept and used draw-based mechanics to select the winner of the sweepstakes drawing.

The winner is predetermined, but we added a bingo-like live and interactive element solely for entertainment purposes where the host actually shouts out players by name when they're close to winning — which is pretty electric. We're running tests in some markets, and we're looking for avenues to potentially bring a variation of this product to the lottery space soon. With something like this, we could blend streaming, entertainment, and lottery into one dynamic experience, and that's something we think could really resonate, especially with younger, digitally-native audiences who grew up expecting this type of immersive entertainment.

Brad Cummings: I agree. This is the basis of the aggregation model that we built. Today's players, especially the younger crowd, are used to video games that reward skill. So we've dabbled with ways to create that feeling of interactivity and engagement,

while staying true to the core of what makes a lottery game a lottery game: pure chance.

But here's the catch — players are smart enough to tell when something looks like it involves skill ... but doesn't. And when that

happens, it backfires. It feels like a bait-and-switch. So yes, let's innovate. Let's push boundaries. But let's also be honest about what's under the hood. There's no need to fake strategy when pure entertainment can carry the game just fine.

Randy Spielman: Frank, you mentioned earlier that in Connecticut you're limited to selling draw games online. Do you think there's room to build something born digital, a true digital-first draw game, rather than just treating online like another distribution channel for the traditional retail draw games?

Frank Suarez: Absolutely. Not only is there room, I think we need to create digital-first draw games. The digital space isn't just a new way to deliver tickets; it's a creative playground with unlimited potential and a whole toolkit we're not fully using yet.

I'm always pushing our development team to break new ground — to think beyond just adapting what's worked in retail. A digital-first draw game could be interactive, dynamic, maybe even feel like a hybrid between a traditional draw and a mini live show. We already use monitor games in retail to add some flair — so why not use digital's built-in strengths to do the same, only better?

What Pete described earlier — a live-streamed, hosted experience — that's the kind of thinking I'm excited about. Let's leverage the digital space to bring draw games into the 21st century with some personality and maybe a little more drama and thrills.

Mike Lightman: Frank's spot-on. And we don't have to reinvent the entire wheel to get started. In Michigan, for example, we launched an instant-style draw game with a progressive jackpot layered on top. This week it cracked the top four most-played games in the market.

It didn't happen overnight. Players had to discover it, try it, get excited — but once they did, it clicked. The key is persistence and smart design. Done right, digital-first draw games won't just have a place—they'll be a staple.

Alex Green: In Germany, as pretty much everywhere, the big challenge is figuring out how to attract new players to the lottery space. At ZEAL, we set out to understand what actually motivates new audiences — their desires, their dreams, their aspirations. We wanted to connect on an emotional level with something different than cash prizes.

We talked to people who didn't play the lottery to understand what would inspire them to play. And what we heard loud and clear from many people was that experiences matter more than money. That insight led us to create Dream House Lottery, a lottery game built around the idea of winning not just a prize, but a life upgrade. It wasn't just, “Here's a dream house”—it was, “Here's your dream life.” We wrapped it in a full narrative, gave it emotional weight, and let the storytelling do the heavy lifting. Designing the many ways to showcase the house was fun, but nothing beats watching a winner step across that threshold into their new life for the first time. That's a moment you feel. That's content that connects on an emotional level.

And here's the best part: it worked. It appealed to a broad cross-section of player profiles. But the main thing is that we brought in an entirely new kind of player, people who weren't previously engaged with lottery at all. We tracked their journey and saw that many of them started playing more traditional lottery products. The key is to understand the audience, design a value proposition that speaks to them, and weave it through every touch-point along the player journey. That's been a winning formula for us.

Randy Spielman: Love that. And it really underscores how digital has enabled lotteries to leverage data in a way that was previously not possible. KPIs aren't just performance metrics anymore; they're lenses into player behavior. So, what KPIs do you find most useful for shaping content strategy and tailoring the player experience?

Continued and concluded in the online digital version of the magazine which can be viewed at PGRI main news website PublicGaming.com.