

A long time ago in a galaxy far,
far away....

The art of managing a brand on the virtual "battlefront": An Electronic Arts Case

A crisis management case by Victoria Kotras, Ninette Hanson and Léandre Tellene



Electronic Arts

- Californian gaming company founded in 1982
- 3rd largest in market valuation as of today
- Great commercial success but poor reputation from the public



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BATTLEFIELD



FIFA

MADDEN 



STAR WARS
BATTLEFRONT II


The SIMS™

NFS

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A promotional artwork for Star Wars Battlefront II. The background is a dark, star-filled space with a large planet and several spacecraft. In the foreground, a battle is taking place on a planet with pyramids. A Jedi, a Stormtrooper, and Darth Maul are the central figures. The title 'STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II' is written in white, with the EA logo below it.

STAR WARS
BATTLEFRONT II
EA

THE WAR


BATTLEFRONT II



Timeline of launch

2016 – 2017

Announcement of the
game and
presentations/trailers



November 17th, 2017
Launch of the game

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2017

Public Testing (Beta)

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Concerns about microtransactions

Loot boxes

- Unethical gambling
- Possible purchase with real-life money
- Unfair gameplay advantages



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Concerns about Microtransactions



Locked content

- Favourite characters not available from the start
- Unlockable in-game, but only after plenty of playing time
- Possible purchase with real-life money

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Lots of activity on social media

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Response from EA?

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The Community Response

- Post on Reddit complaining about locked characters
- One of many complaints on r/battlefront, and other social media

Developer Response Seriously? I paid 80\$ to have Vader locked? (self:StarWarsBattlefront)
submitted 3 days ago by [MBMMaverick](#)   x8

This is a joke. I'll be contacting EA support for a refund... I can't even playing f [redacted] g Darth Vader?!?!? Disgusting. This age of "micro-transactions" has gone WAY too far. Leave it to EA though to stretch the boundaries.

2937 comments [source](#) [share](#) [save](#) [hide](#) [give gold](#) [report](#) [crosspost](#)
[hide all child comments](#)

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The Proposed Reply

“The intent is to provide players with a sense of pride and accomplishment for unlocking different heroes.

As for cost, we selected initial values based upon data from the Open Beta and other adjustments made to milestone rewards before launch. [...] we'll be making constant adjustments to ensure that players have challenges that are compelling, rewarding, and of course attainable via gameplay.

We appreciate the candid feedback, and the passion the community has put forth around the current topics here on Reddit, our forums and across numerous social media outlets.

Our team will continue to make changes and monitor community feedback and update everyone as soon and as often as we can.”

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The Proposed Reply

Do you publish this message?

- If yes, what are the reasons that convince you to post the message?
 - If no, what concerns you about the message?

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Decision time

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EACommunityTeam 3 years ago  6  6  2  & 609 More 

The intent is to provide players with a sense of pride and accomplishment for unlocking different heroes.

As for cost, we selected initial values based upon data from the Open Beta and other adjustments made to milestone rewards before launch. Among other things, we're looking at average per-player credit earn rates on a daily basis, and we'll be making constant adjustments to ensure that players have challenges that are compelling, rewarding, and of course attainable via gameplay.

We appreciate the candid feedback, and the passion the community has put forth around the current topics here on Reddit, our forums and across numerous social media outlets.

Our team will continue to make changes and monitor community feedback and update everyone as soon and as often as we can.



-667815



Give Award

Share

Report

Save

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Edit 8: Now at 680,844 downvotes. At \$60 lost per downvote, that equates to a **revenue loss of \$40,850,640.**

 1.9k  Give Award Share Report Save

Edit 8: Now at 680,844 downvotes. At \$60 lost per downvote, that equates to a **revenue loss of \$40,850,640.**

Not buying your game seems like a sense of pride and accomplishment.

 1.0k  Give Award Share Report Save

"Can't divide a community if there is no community"



 16.0k  Give Award Share Report Save

-667815

I hope you get voted worst company for a third time EA

 3.9k  Give Award Share Report Save

That's rich. Just be honest. The truth is you know very few people are going to sink a full work week into this game and you're hoping that somebody is desperate enough to buy credits to unlock the character. It has nothing to do with providing a "sense of pride and accomplishment." This is a flat-out lie and you know it. How naive do you think your player base is?

 19.7k  Give Award Share Report Save

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Attempts from EA to Solve the Crisis

- **Q&A from the developers on Reddit**
 - Avoided important questions
 - Responses filled with PR communication
 - Results: **Failure**
- **Apology from the company and changes announced**
 - Just before the launch of the game
 - Will still include microtransactions later
 - Results: **Failure**

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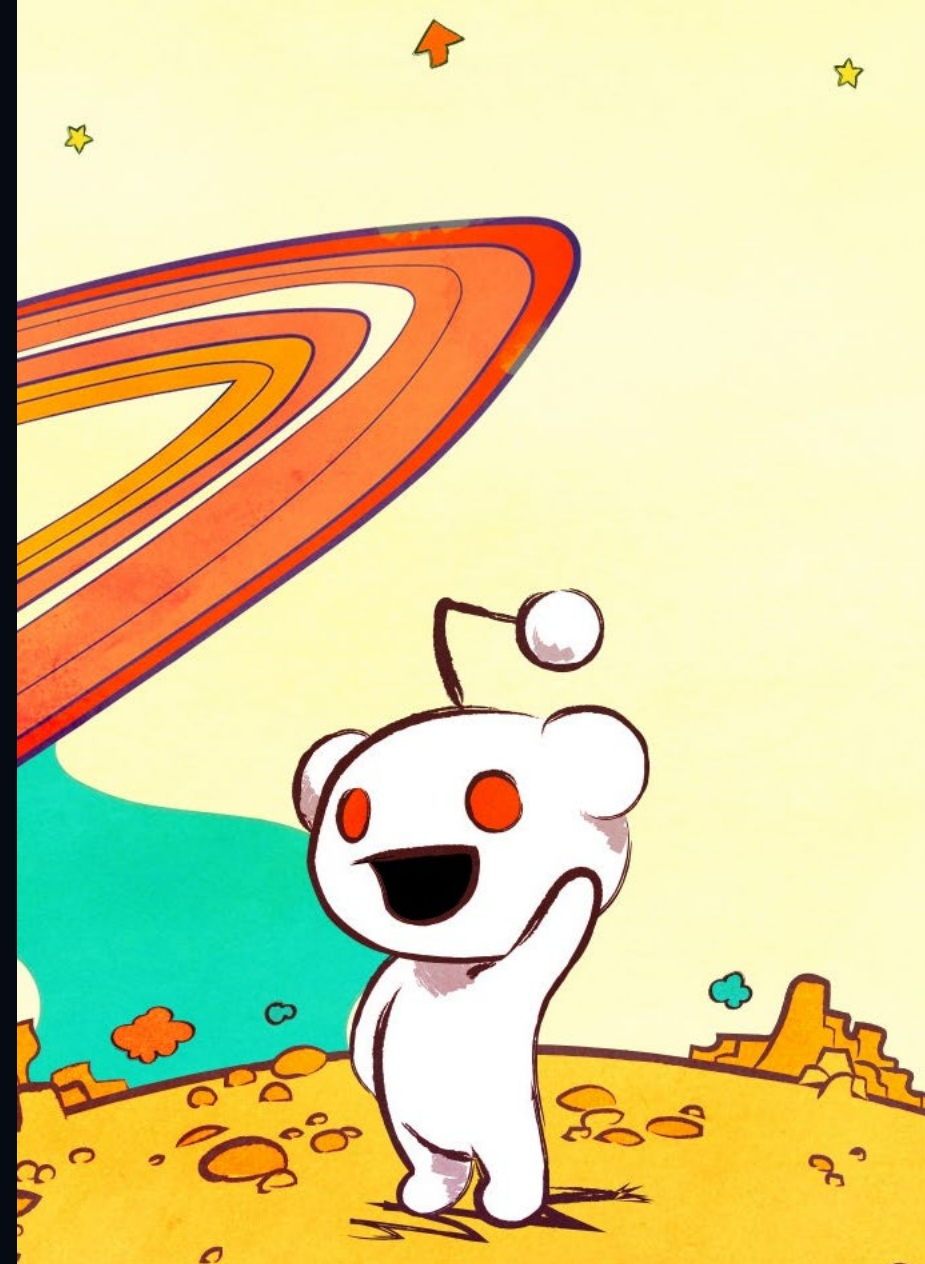
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Brand Communities

- Admirers that connect and engage with one another around the brand
- Particularly important in the gaming sector
- Large use of social media, such as Reddit
- Can be of great value for the brand to increase visibility and defend the brand; it can also be a threat if mismanaged



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EXTERNAL	<p>VALUE PROPOSITION</p> <p><i>To deliver the best games, content and online services for Internet-connected consoles, mobile devices and PC</i></p>	<p>RELATIONSHIPS</p> <p><i>Committed to each other; listening, having humility and being open to grow and change</i></p>	<p>POSITION</p> <p><i>Global leader in digital interactive entertainment</i></p>
INTERNAL / EXTERNA	<p>EXPRESSION</p> <p><i>Well-known brands e.g. The Sims, Madden NFL, EA Sports FIFA, Battlefield, Need for Speed, Dragon Age</i></p>	<p>BRAND CORE</p> <p><i>"To bring imagination, original ideas, and excitement to everything we do"</i></p>	<p>PERSONALITY</p> <p><i>Your gaming entertainment company</i></p>
INTERNAL	<p>MISSION AND VISION</p> <p><i>We exist to inspire the world to play and to change the way millions play every day</i></p>	<p>CULTURE</p> <p><i>To work for the accountability and integrity it takes to be a successful global team</i></p>	<p>COMPETENCES</p> <p><i>A community of artists, storytellers, technologists & innovators</i></p>

Corporate Identity Matrix of



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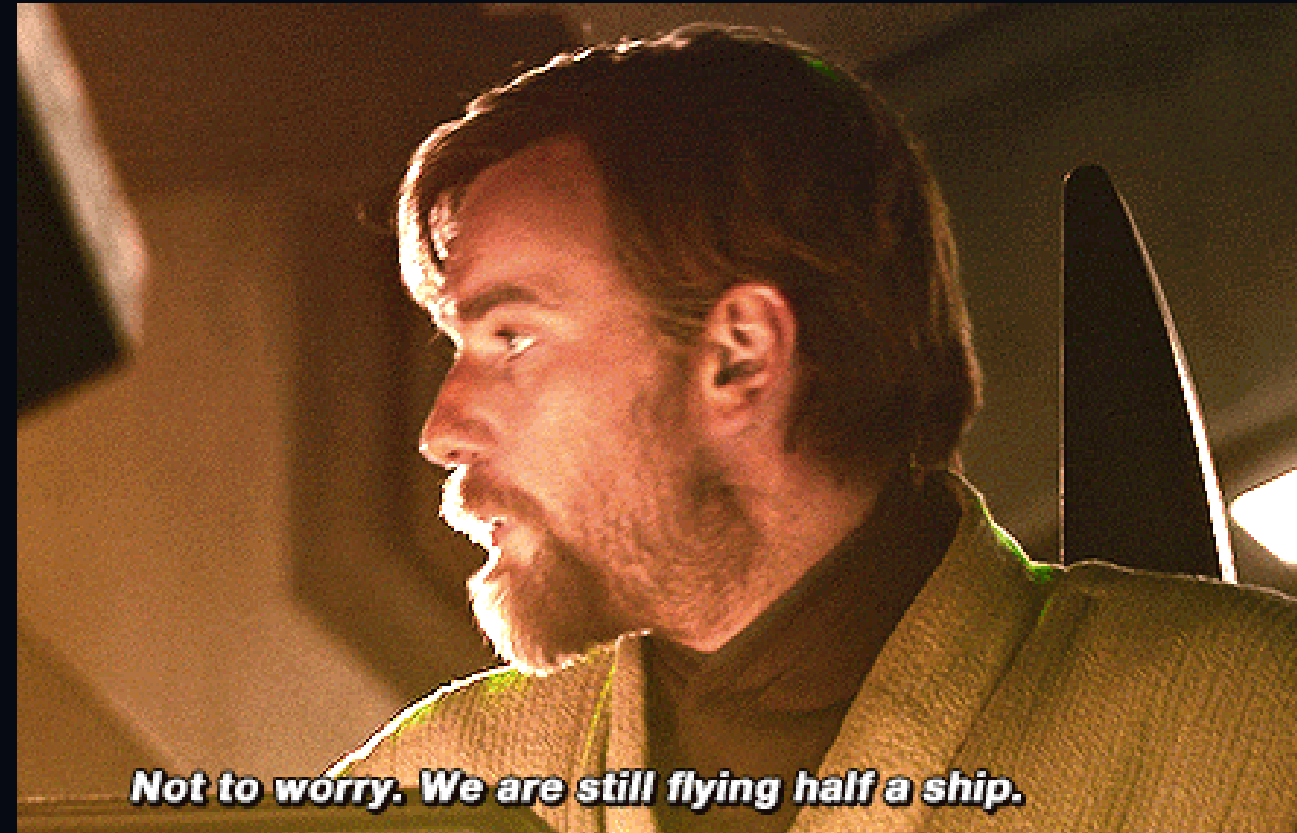
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Corporate Communication in Times of Crisis

- Important to determine, understand and target the stakeholders you communicate with
- Digital media brings opportunities and threats
- Crisis and preventative crisis communication need to take place and include all departments



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Corporate Reputation Overview of



Strong elements

- *Market position*
- *Product quality (the game itself)*
- *Profitability*
- *Innovation*

Weak elements

- *Customer satisfaction*
- *Customer service*
- *Corporate Social Responsibility*
- *Service quality*

Overall: Weak

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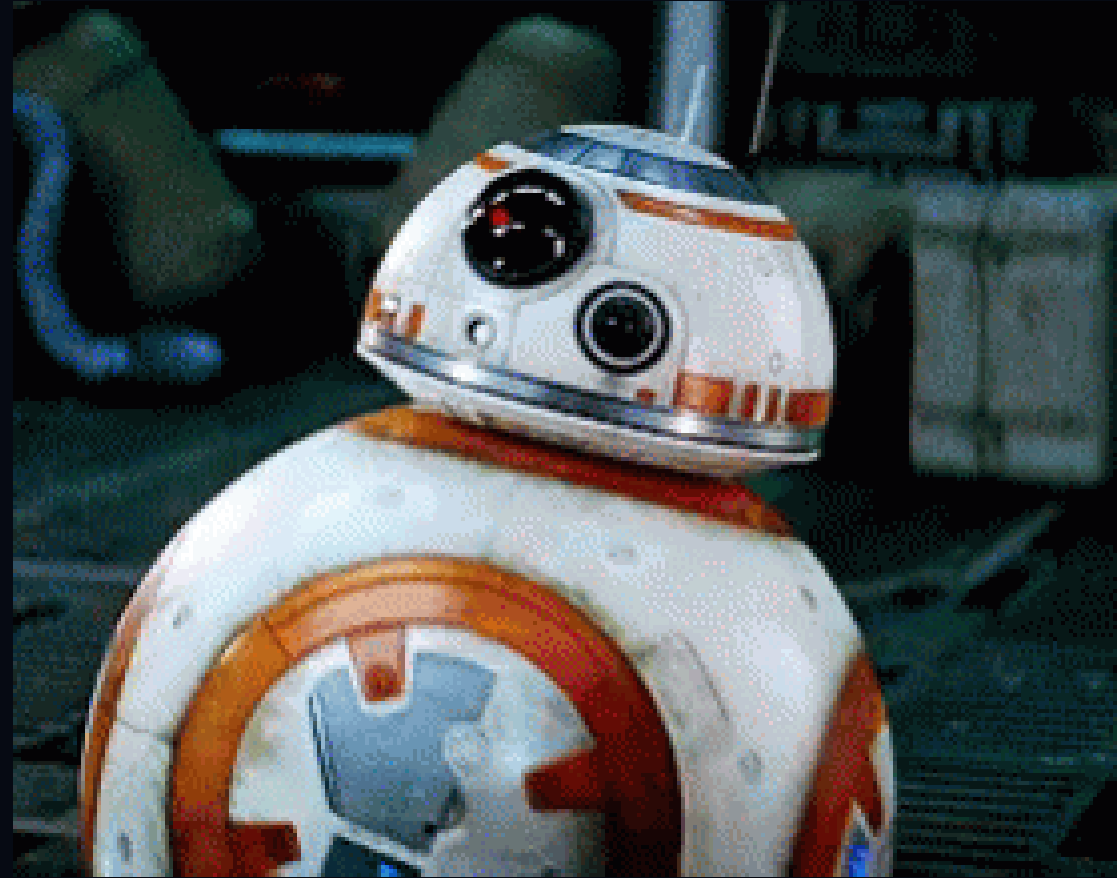
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Key Takeaways

- To identify all the aspects of the crisis and based on that, choosing the appropriate communication is essential
- It is not always beneficial to be seen as corporate
- Brand communities can make or break a company's reputation



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May The Force Be With You.

