



# **Customer Engagement Models: Riot Games**

**by Curtis N. Bingham**

**CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER  
COUNCIL**

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## Customer Engagement Models: Riot Games

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*Curtis Bingham is the recognized authority on chief customer officers and the first to promote this role as a catalyst for competitive advantage. He is the creator of the CCO Roadmap, a groundbreaking work containing 100+ critical strategies essential for customer centricity. As an international speaker, author, and consultant, Curtis is passionate about creating customer strategy to sustainably grow revenue, profit, and loyalty.*

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Many companies today have developed paths to greater engagement and greater profitability through recruiting the involvement of their customers. To restate the definition of engagement: it is the extent of a customer's willingness to invest his/her discretionary time for a mutual benefit, and particularly for the benefit of a business.

Established in Southern California in 2006, Riot Games is a US-based publisher best known for its multiplayer online battle arena title, *League of Legends*. As a testament to the level of engagement Riot Games has achieved with its player base, today the average percentage of new players that come through word of mouth is between 85 and 90%. A significant contributor to this engagement is structural: Riot created a game that's simply more fun to play with friends. Players recruit their friends to play with them because they enjoy a better gaming experience.

Furthermore, Riot's focus has never been: How can we influence people to talk about the game, talk about the product, and bring in friends? Rather, the focus is: How can we make something that's worth talking about, worth bringing friends into, and worth sharing with a player's social group? There's always a focus on the social aspects that influence player experience, but the company believes its success specifically derives from its efforts towards not manipulating player actions, but manipulating its product with the net effect that player actions change.

One of Riot's most outstanding examples of player engagement can be found within the process by which it enables its player community to recognize and manage negative in-game behavior, called the Tribunal. The game is played in sessions that last anywhere from 20 to 50 minutes at a time. At the end of each session, if a player behaved exhibited any

A white silhouette of a lighthouse on a white base, with a blue beam of light shining from the top. The background is blue with a yellow and orange curved line.

unsportsmanlike behavior such as berating teammates or name calling, the other players can report him. When enough reports are filed against an individual – a number based upon the ratio of reports filed to total games played – a case file comprised of chat logs (in game instant-messaging), statistics, game data, activity, etc. is generated.

This case is displayed at random to members of the tribunal; other players in the community who have voluntarily chosen to participate in regulating and weighing in on community behavior. Based upon the data available within the case file, tribunal members vote whether or not to punish the player involved. In the case of repeat Tribunal cases, if the threshold of punishment becomes high enough, Riot takes action against the account; action that can escalate based upon the player's previous history and punishment. But punishment is viewed as a last resort. Through the constructive feedback of peers, Riot attempts to optimize teamwork, cooperation and positive player experiences. The best outcome is for a player to never show up at the tribunal again. Therefore, all systems are designed to adjust, not punish, behavior by allowing players equal ability to reward their peers for positive behavior by 'honoring' them after a game. When players do actually get punished, they are sent all the details in their case files: what they did, how others felt about it, why it had a negative impact on player experience, and why it was bad.

In Riot's example, it is peers – fellow players – who are applying and enforcing standards of appropriate gaming behavior; they are devoting their discretionary time to preserve the quality of experience for everyone. This strengthens the community, gives it greater credibility and authority, and at the same time frees company resources to be spent on more valuable opportunities. It also fosters greater engagement by players and a stronger commitment to the game's ecosystem.\*

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## About CURTIS N. BINGHAM



As Executive Director of the Chief Customer Officer Council™, Curtis Bingham is the recognized authority on chief customer officers and the first to promote this role as a catalyst for competitive advantage. He is the creator of the CCO Roadmap, a groundbreaking work containing 100+ critical strategies essential for customer centricity. He has created the comprehensive Customer Centricity Maturity Model used to assess and guide customer-centric organizational strategy, and is a champion of customer engagement as a critical growth engine. As an international speaker, author, and consultant, Curtis is passionate about creating customer strategy to sustainably grow revenue, profit, and loyalty.

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