SIP Deconstruction of Riot Games

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1. Company Background

Riot Games is a game developing company that was founded in 2006 by CEOs Brandon Beck and Marc Merrill in Los Angeles, California (Riot Games 2024). The two attended University of Southern California and enjoyed playing video games (Riot Games 2024). Their passion for gaming, comic books, and board games led to them pursuing the opportunity to create Riot Games (Riot Games 2024). Despite their passion for gaming, they both finished their bachelor's degrees in business and had jobs relating to business management (Crecente 2019). Yet, whenever they met up with each other, they always gravitated to talking about games (Crecente 2019). With their passion, they managed to be involved with different gaming companies and learning the ways of how gaming companies run (Crecente 2019). Thus, they managed to gather $1.5 million from family and angel investors and begin their path to developing their own gaming company (McKnead 2021; Crecente 2019). Since then, the company has created well known computer games in the gaming community such as League of Legends and Valorant. League of Legends was their debut video game and was launched in 2009 and has since grown to garner "around 115 million monthly players" in 2021 (Crecente 2019; McKnead 2021). Today, they have more than 20 offices around the world, totaling roughly 4,500 employees (Riot Games 2024). The company is known to host esports events, creating commotion not only in their own community, but in the overall gaming world. Many gaming influencers, mainly known for their gaming streams on platforms such as Twitch, TikTok, and YouTube, also play the game frequently; making the company's top games garner 26,902,683 viewer hours for League of Legends and 22,413,966 viewer hours for Valorant (Statista 2024).

2. **Mission Statement**
    - In the about section of Riot Games' 'About Riot' section, they have a series of slides about some of their values as follow: "We are players first. Everything we do is in service to the players. This continuous focus inspires the most meaningful and lasting game experiences. We are serious about games. Players deserve someone who cares as much as they do. We match the passion of those who see games as meaningful life pursuit, because we do too. We dream and deliver. Our vision for the future is bold. We relentlessly work to surpass players' expectations of what games can be. We are in for the long term. There's something special about a lasting relationship with games. Our commitment to players is measured in years and decades, not in days or weeks. We are one Riot. We are player-led, not product-led. We collaborate across teams and around the world to create uniquely Riot experiences that exceed the sum of their parts" (Riot Games 2024).
3. **Brand Positioning**

To: Gamers who enjoy multiplayer strategic battle arena games with their friends and different people around the world

Brand is: diverse in player self-expression through their variety of customizable features and game characters representing different identities and cultures

That: allows people to build communities and friendships through fun gameplay

Because: Riot Games constantly tries to meet their community's expectations by implementing new characters, features, games, and host events

4. **Statement of Problem or Opportunity**

In 2018, the company was under legal investigation by the State of California's Civil Rights Department due to complaints from female workers regarding sex discrimination, harassment, and retaliation that was later resolved in 2022 (Top Class Actions 2022; McCracken v Riot Games, Inc 2022). This case carried on into 2023 where the Civil Rights Department approved the "$100 million consent decree to resolve allegations against Riot Games related to systemic sex discrimination, harassment, and retaliation" (The California Civil Rights Department 2023). According to Sam Dean, a staff writer for Los Angeles Times, "...10 current and former employees said they experienced double standards, glass ceilings or sexual harassment at a company where 21 of the 23 senior executives are men and 80% of the total workforce is male"

(Dean 2018). The allegations immediately caught the attention of numerous news organizations reporting the allegations about Riot Games. Riot Games made an initial response where they addressed the issue, apologized to everyone, and laid out their steps to making their workforce diverse and inclusive (Riot Games 2018). Despite the company's news statement about how it would resolve this issue, Riot Games still had negative views from the public. Many on online communities said that they doubted that Riot Games would follow through with internal reforms now that it was a large corporation (Reddit 2018). (Note these edits – can you be more succinct like this? Just for reference. Not editing beyond this… Also, a company or brand is singular, not plural.)Although the general public had many doubts about Riot Games' management not doing anything about the issue, Riot Games did the exact opposite and exceeded public expectations, creating extensive opportunities for their company. Since then, from 2019 through 2020, Riot Games has made efforts to fix this issue by firing many male employees in charge of diversity and inclusion in the company, hiring more women and diverse groups into the company, fixing their definitions of diversity and inclusion culture on their site, hiring a third-party to evaluate their progress in the matter, and hold more interview training, anti-harassment, and anti-bias training (Rand 2019, Riot Games 2018). Their drastic changes inside the company have given them opportunities to explore and create new content for a broader audience. Today, they continue to create more campaigns and content that are to inspire underrepresented groups such as the LGBTQ+ community and women who play their games (Aragon 2024, Riot Games 2024, Riot Games 2024). These changes have allowed Riot Games to steadily increase its numbers in women and minorities staffing, constant pay equity, and global support (Riot Games 2022). Riot Games has to continue this steady climb by continuing to create campaigns and content that reach their current large audience and audiences that have yet to be represented. I'm not sure which campaign you are evaluating, as you list several here. The lawsuit and reforms are too old. Or did they do a campaign after the 2023 decree was issued? Or did they launch another specific 2023 or 2024 campaign? If so, and with all their history, what was the intent of that campaign? Why now? Why was it important to the brand?

5. **Research**

Research Goals: How can Riot Games continue to build their community trust? Who is Riot Games' next target audience? Is Riot Games doing well with their current community?

Research Methodology:

1. Primary

1. **Qualitative** (interviews, focus groups, etc.): Who? How many? Where?
    1. Focus groups to ask their thoughts about the company. Focus groups will be groups of women, men, and individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. Questions asked will be about current thoughts about the company, the company's games, and what they wish Riot Games could expand on.
    2. Online social media monitoring to understand the current views with what content Riot games is putting out. Find online community thoughts and ideas about the company's content and games. Monitor different gaming streams to understand what goes on inside the games and how communities interact with each other in game.
2. **Quantitative**: Who will you survey? How?
    1. Riot Games can survey their players by implementing a survey option for users who log into one of the company's games. To have more players want to complete the survey, the company could implement incentives related to its games such as in-game money.

2. Secondary sources: List of sources

- Media coverage and articles from various sources
- Reviews about the company through Glassdoor and Comparably
- Statistics from Statista about company's ranking in games and revenue
- Company annual reports in diversity and inclusion and social impact

VI. Situation Analysis (SWOTS)

Strengths:

- Diverse in representation after the DEI reforms. The company has added content that surrounds different cultures and groups of people. This includes women in gaming, LGBTQIA+ Community, and cultural identities.
- Well known in the gaming community
- Hosts big tournaments in gaming

Weaknesses:

- 2018 work discrimination scandal

- Trying to shift to mobile/console gaming – don't know this
- Known to have toxic communities in their games – example?

Opportunities:

- Influencer marketing vague – explain
- Hosting more esports tournaments for different genders business opp
- Streaming platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Twitch – trend: increasing platforms like this
- Hosting more esports tournaments around the world business opp

Threats:

- Competitor gaming companies (Blizzard, Battlenet, Epic Games, Nexon Games)
- Back to in-person school and work. Less people playing games
- Rise in pricing due to chip manufacturing
- Cancel culture (could catch fire again if someone in company makes same mistake relating to previous scandal)

VII. Strategic Insights

- After their scandal, Riot Games must continue to push for diversity and inclusion by pushing out that they are supportive of all communities. Riot Games must equally represent groups that feel underrepresented as well as correctly represent them through media. Riot Games must be able to correctly represent these groups as well as push for change in the gaming industry all while seeming genuine to the public.
- Riot Games could continue to use the opportunity in hosting esports tournaments catered to different genders. The esports industry, like many regular sports industries, are heavily dominated by men. Riot Games could use this opportunity to invest more time and money into hosting big esports tournaments for professional gamers who are women.business opp
- With social media rising, Riot Games could partner up gaming streamers who advocate for diversity and inclusion in the gaming industry. This will give a chance for more people to play the company's games and change how the overall community is viewed. Riot Games could use this to strengthen their claimed values, which is to cater to all gamers.

- Riot Games' main goal is to have its players have meaningful game experiences. The company tries to meet this goal by creating characters that represent different cultures around the world. Some of the characters feel repetitive to one culture. Riot Games should instead create more characters that represent cultures and countries that haven't been represented yet in their works.

VIII. Communications Goal(s)

- Meet in-game player needs and expectations
    - Riot Games' main values center over the expectations and needs of its community. To meet in-game player needs and expectations, Riot Games must constantly research and observe the gaming community's reactions to the content that gets put out by it. For previous years, the company has also done annual reports that showcase its yearly reports (Riot Games 2023).
- Include more diversity projects and campaigns
    - To make up for its scandal relating to diversity and inclusion, Riot Games must continue and build the trust between the company and its community of gamers. To do so, it has released content for various communities such as the LGBTQ+ and culture-based communities (Riot Games 2023, Riot Games 2024).

IX. Communications Objectives

- Increase amount of positive opinion in LGBTQ+ community by 10% within the month of June 2024.
    - In June 2024, Riot Games launched their pride month campaign. In this, the company created social media content such as TikToks and YouTube videos, in-game customizable features, pride playlists on Spotify, a donation drive for the LGBTQ+ community, and a community hub for everyone to post their artwork (Riot Games 2024). This goal is important for Riot Games to stay consistent with its diversity and inclusion reforms and trust with its community. The percent increase goal is 10% because of the short period of time.
- Increase in-game purchase revenue by 5% among gamers who play games made by Riot Games within the month of June 2024.

    - In June of 2024, 24% of the 10,085 video game consumers that were surveyed answered that they have purchased content in-game (Statista 2024). Though the report does not directly state which games, we can assume that some of these participants play games created by Riot Games because of how popular its games were in June of 2024 (Statista 2024).
- Increase stream viewership (Twitch, YouTube Gaming streams) of games made by Riot Games by 20% in the month of June 2024.
    - In June of 2024, the most watched game on the gaming streaming platform Twitch was League of Legends (Statista 2024). The company could measure how much their recent campaigns, such as the pride month campaign, could have affected the viewership ratings of the games.

X. Target Audiences

- Gaming Floaters
    - Gen Z viewers, ages 18-29, who enjoy watching video game streams after a long day at school and/or work. They like to watch and keep up with gaming trends, but do not play the games themselves. They live in highly populated cities in the United States and "15% of video game streaming viewers consider themselves to be part of the LGBTQ+ community" (Statista 2023). 61% of viewers are male and either have or are pursuing their college education (Statista 2023).
- Gaming Streamers/Influencers
    - Male streamers and influencers aged 30-39 who constantly stream on the gaming streaming platform Twitch. Their full time job is to make content revolving around League of Legends and Valorant gameplay. Although they earn their income through playing video games, they have graduated and earned college degrees before pursuing video game streaming. They live in highly populated cities in the U.S. and 13% of video game livestreamers consider themselves to be part of the LGBTQ+ community (Statista 2023).
- After-Work Gamers
    - Women aged 23-27 (older Gen Z) who are independent and have a medium salary from their office jobs (Medium 2023). They are part of 17% of gamers who self-identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community and are proud of who they are as

an individual (Entertainment Software Association 2024). There has been a rise in the amount of women who are interested in playing Riot Games' Valorant since 2021, and have since then continued to grow in the United States (Medium 2023, Entertainment Software Association 2024). This increase in women gaming could be tied to how in the game Valorant, the women aren't sexualized and are "portrayed as strong, capable, and fierce" (Medium 2023).

XI. Current Audience Brand Perception

- In June 2023, pride month was celebrated by Riot Games, yet some reports thought that the campaign for June 2023 pride month was underwhelming (Richman 2023). Many were appreciative that the company tried to show support for the community, yet felt like it was a "low-effort" attempt by the game developers (Richman 2023).

XII. Desired Audience Brand Perception

- Riot Games wants its community to feel appreciated and accepted when playing its games. The company constantly mentions throughout its site that player experiences matter the most to them (Riot Games 2024).

XIII. Key Message Mapping

- **Single-minded message**
    - "Happy Pride! We're celebrating this year with more in-game events and goodies, an updated Pride playlist, and a brand new community hub to showcase the incredible creativity across LGBTQIA+ gaming communities" (Riot Games 2024).
        - This message summarizes what the company is planning to do in the upcoming month. The company posted this message to gain excitement days before pride month as well as showing support to the LGBTQIA+ community. It's straightforward and shows that the company is continuing its tradition of supporting the LGBTQ+ community.
- **Audience-specific message**
    - Gaming Floaters
        - "Whether it's a stream, a Discord channel of friends, fan art, cosplay, or any other way you show your pride, we want to shine a spotlight on it. If you or your friends are doing cool stuff for the LGBTQIA+ gaming

community, have them submit – we'd love to learn more" (Riot Games 2024).

- This quote reaches viewers who keep up with Riot Games content, but does not play or buy anything from the company's games. Viewers don't have to download the game to participate in celebrating pride month with their friends and beloved gaming streamers.

- Gaming Streamers/Influencers
  - "Pride content hits the Rift with Patch 14.11 and is available until Patch 14.12's conclusion. The event brings a new mission and Pride Emote, 'United,' featuring Twisted Fate and Neeko, as well as returning Pride emotes for 1 Blue Essence each—essence-ially free!" (Riot Games: League of Legends 2024).
  - The release of new content, specifically content that adds to the storyline of a Riot game, draws in gaming streamers and influencers to play through the game and give their opinions about the game.
- After-Work Gamers
  - "At the end of the day, identities shouldn't be tied to a particular month. We believe authentic representation makes for better game experiences 365 days a year. We take our characters' stories and identities very seriously and we want to share who they are in organic ways that make sense for each character" (Riot Games 2023).
  - This quote reaches women who play games made by Riot Games due to how they strive to represent different communities and cultures through their game characters. The message creates an authentic feel towards gamers who strongly identify with the LGBTQ+ community.

XIV. Strategies

- Highlight LGBTQ+ community content through social media to show constant support for the community
  - Posting content during the month can create the impression that Riot Games is taking 2024's pride month seriously compared to last year's attempt (Medium

2023). Riot Games must post consistently about community efforts to celebrate the month.

- Create new in-game content relating to LGBTQ+ community to add more depth to the characters in game.
    - Adding new content could drive overall attention towards Riot Games. The new content within games allows streamers and influencers to play through them with their fanbase. These playthroughs add more viewership towards Riot Games' work.
- Use gaming celebrities/influencers within the LGBTQ+ community to advocate this year's pride month.
    - Collaborate with well known artists and streamers who are part of the LGBTQ+ community to add enthusiasm for this year's pride month. These collaborations could reach audiences to interact with the content that's being pushed out by their favorite content creators and Riot Games.
- Emphasize Riot Games' values tying back to diversity and inclusion in its overall community.
    - To avoid fire and backlash again after the company's 2018 scandal, Riot Games must continue to advocate its values regarding diversity and inclusion. The company can continue to generate content and campaigns that cater specifically towards this year's pride month.

XV. Tactics

- **Paid**
    - **Madge**: Madge is a music artist who has worked with Riot Games. They have worked on creating a new song for one of the characters in Riot's game, Valorant. In March of 2024, Madge created the song 2WORLDS to showcase Valorant's first ever non-binary character in the game (Riot Games 2024). Riot Games has reached out to Madge to help them with this year's pride month playlist (Riot Games 2024). The new character in Riot's game helps gain high expectations for the upcoming pride month.
- **Earned**

- **Press Releases**: Press releases that publish details surrounding the latest gaming news covered Riot Games' new pride month content. The articles overall summarize what Riot Games has shared to the public about what it will do for pride month as well as what Riot has done previously within the year that led up to this years' pride month. Some articles also go through specific details about the content that was pushed out in each game made by Riot (Cook 2024, DeSena 2024, GameRefinery Team 2024, Mandatory 2024).
- **Gaming Streamers/Influencer Reviews**: With the new in-game content, gaming streamers/influencers have been covering their thoughts about the new pride month collectibles and features. A lot of them stream their gameplays to thousands of viewers through live streaming platforms such as Twitch and YouTube Gaming (Cannonminion 2024, Joshseki 2024). Through these small clips, gaming streamers and content creators express their excitement and thoughts with their online community viewers which overall spreads positivity for the month.

- **Shared**
  - **March for Pride**: Every year, Riot Games pushes their staff and community to participate in raising money for LGBTQ+ charities. The company hopes to bring support for the LGBTQ+ community as well as gain trust with its gaming community. This ties back to how Riot Games emphasizes its values when it comes to player diversity and inclusivity (Riot Games 2024). This could also reach individuals who are not familiar with the gaming community, but are willing to interact with Riot Games content to help raise money and thus slowly get familiar with Riot Games.
  - **Community Pride Hub**: To celebrate, Riot Games created a community hub where gaming fans could share their artwork and cosplays with each other. Fans would post what they have created onto the hub and get featured in the gallery. This strengthens the LGBTQ+ community and allows individuals to know that they are not alone (Riot Games 2023, Riot Games 2024).
  - **Instagram Posts**: Riot Games has also shared some of the community's artwork and cosplays through its instagram account. Posts surrounding pride month 2024

would be posted once every 1-2 weeks during the month. These posts are showcasing the community pride hub submissions (Riotgames Instagram 2024).

- **Owned**
    - **Employee Stories**: Riot Games has published interviews with its staff who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. These articles go through who they are as a person and how they overcame their struggles with finding their sexuality. These articles show the inside of the company, creating more trust and openness between the company and the gaming community. (Riot Games 2022, Riot Games 2022, Riot Games 2023, Riot Games 2024).
    - **Video/Webinar about Player Policies**: Right before pride month had officially started, the Studio Head for Riot Games' Valorant Anna Donlon has made a video announcement about community guidelines and what the team is going to do when it comes to in-game harassment (Trent 2024). In her statement she also mentions that she and the team want to ensure that players enjoy their time when playing the game (Trent 2024). This major announcement before pride month shows how the company truly values individuals who constantly get harassed online for who they are.

XVI. KPIs - Measurement & Evaluation

- Compare last year's viewership ratings in gaming streams compared to this years.
    - Through Statista, we can look at what the viewership ratings in streaming platforms were in June 2023 for Riot's games such as League of Legends and Valorant (Statista 2023, Statista 2024). As seen in the Statista charts, Riot Games' League of Legends viewership has doubled in just a year and has made its way to the most popular game viewed on the live streaming platform Twitch.
- Compare video game content purchase trends in the gaming community to Riot Games' in-game purchase revenue.
    - Riot Games can compare how they did in the gaming market when it comes to in game purchases. The company could compare their revenue with the in-game purchasing trend of prior years (Statista 2024).

XVII. Timeline

- **N/A**

XVIII. Budget

- In terms of budget, Riot Games has not put as much money into this year's pride month celebration. In 2023, the company celebrated pride month by collaborating with well known artists and launching in-person esports events where they promote the company's support for the LGBTQ+ community (Riot Games 2023). Though there aren't specific numbers showing the amount of money invested into this year's pride month, we can assume that not much was invested this year as they showcased more community work rather than professional work.

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