

Gaming Needs a Game-Changer

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The intention of this essay is to convince the general public that the acceptance of “jailbreaking” video game consoles is important not only to the community of gamers, but to the sale of video games as well. I apologize first and foremost if I lack the vocabulary or the articulation to completely and effectively argue my point. I hope that I may be blessed for a brief moment with the rhetorical precision of a communications major.

As a consequence of being enrolled at a Big Ten university I understand and accept that my ideas might not be immediately accepted by the corporations that want to persuade you otherwise. I will start with arguments they might have and then I will try to illustrate why those corporations are fear-mongering goof-balls.

First I suspect that they will try to convince you that “piracy” will take over the industry and burn it to the ground with a bajillion fiery balls of hell. This is, of course, laughable, but these guys don’t get paid to think, they get paid to make money, so I must profess that I have a profound respect for their effort.

It’s hard to deny that the entertainment industry throws the word “piracy” around like a Middle Eastern dictator throws around the word “terrorism”. They think for some reason everyone will turn a blind eye to their tom-foolery. This likeness brings to surface the “fear-mongering.”

No one likes to be called a dictator, so I’m sure by now the fancy-pants executives are trying to somehow save face. As they’re falling behind I would like to discuss two more points that will invalidate their—excuse my language—poopy argument that “piracy” is a problem.

Everything in this world will be abused in some way by something or someone. Take a moment to observe all the pleasures of the world; tobacco, alcohol, political influence, etc. Should we ban all lobbyists since some might abuse their power? Should we ban all politicians or corporate executives? Of course not! Now, this country has already tried to ban alcohol and it just created more crime and more problems.

If “jailbreaking” consoles is made legal will it be abused? Will it be abused by the minority or the majority? Think carefully, before you let the goof-balls seduce you with their fancy rhetoric. A majority of the world does not have the mental capacity to “jailbreak”. In the event of an unsuccessful “jailbreak” the owners warranty would, of course, be void. This is enough to prevent the amateurs—and (some of) the pros—from even considering the feat.

Therefore, the number of attempts to “jailbreak” will be low. Consider Peter Moore’s 2006 analysis of total defective Xbox 360’s. If corporations are allowed to consider those numbers minute, then our jailbreak numbers (in their eyes) must be microscopic.

Out of a “microscopic” number of jailbreaks, how many of those breaks will be abused and used for “pirating” software? So let’s take this small number of talented people that can jailbreak, the smaller number of them that will actually jailbreak, and then out of that number we

identify the prodigies. Why are they important and why do they matter to the sale of video games?

Microsoft—silly goof-balls—did some funny stuff during the launch of the first generation Kinect. When I say funny, I mean the complete opposite of intelligent. When the Kinect was first launched we got to see some very talented people (as Microsoft would say) commit a crime. These very talented people connected their Kinect to their computers by means of “jailbreaking.” Microsoft at the time threatened legal action against anyone doing this. Like many great corporations before them, Microsoft back tracked. This back track was even more well executed than the departure of Peter Moore after the previously referenced incident.

If you’re interested check out MIT’s mod of the Kinect that allows the user to monitor the heart rate of infants, by enhancing a section of the skin and defining the very unmeasurable (by the human eye) changes in color. It would take these changes and overlay them (on the computer screen) over the whole body to show the pulse of an infant that may otherwise appear lifeless. Their accuracy is within 3-6 beats per minute.

Do you remember Eli Whitney? You might know him as an inventor. I know him as an innovator. They (inventors and innovators) are distinct, but not entirely separate. Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin. He also created the idea of “interchangeable parts.” He didn’t invent the rifle, his innovation led to a better, faster, more efficient way of assembling the rifle.

Corporations make it very difficult to innovate. This slows the progress of the industry. These goof-balls will, of course, try to convince you that they are making it easier. If they were, would we be having this debate today? Microsoft has its “@ID” program, but really it’s just a way for them to control the process and make money. They like money...so much so they are willing to release an entirely broken game to the general public and then pretend like it never happened. Bonnie Ross will explain that reference to you later.

I did not forget that I promised to explain why “jailbreaking” is important to the overall health of the industry. It is, in fact, crucial to the sale of games. We’re all straight shooters here so I’ll try to be as direct and brief as possible in my closing argument. I hope that I have not bored any of you, and I again hope that my articulation and knowledge of the English language has not failed me.

50 Shades of Grey, American Sniper, Furious 7...these movies all have something in common. Do you know what it is? In spite of the rise of “piracy” these movies were all able to break (within the last year) box office records for their respective release dates or genre. How can we say that “piracy” has hurt the industry when that industry is breaking its own records? How can they be breaking records in the face of rising “piracy”? That magic word we used earlier.

Innovation in an economic system such as ours leads to increased sales and growth. It’s the true beauty of capitalism. People are willing to pay for the quality of things. You can’t hand them—excuse my language again—malarkey and expect them to willingly and openly pay for it.

If you allow the “jailbreaking” of consoles, the market will become more competitive. If homebrewed games are out there for free and if they are “better” than the paid-for content, then

the paid-for content will have to become better. Your corporations hate competition, they would rather just be handed big bags of cash disguised by the famous trademark of John 117.

This competition might even lower the price of video game content, and corporation hate that idea, because again, they expect their profits to be protected by some magical entity as if they were entitled to never-ending cash-flow.

If the homebrewed games are sub-par then the community would rather play the games they pay for and “jailbreaking” would have a zero sum effect on the sales and profits of the industry. Therefore, you would suspect that the real opposition to “jailbreaking” is of course the fear that corporations would have to compete at an unprecedented level. Is the law designed to reduce competition or to encourage it?