

Players lead Pennsylvania Lottery's product life cycle decisions

Accelerating innovation, optimizing future game development, and increasing revenue with consent-based player feedback

With frequent product launches, in an effort to embed the voice of its players into its product life cycle decisions, Pennsylvania Lottery officials launched PA Lottery Insiders in 2017 – a private online community of Lottery enthusiasts committed to providing honest feedback. Suddenly the Lottery was able to better evaluate and track new product launches, and optimize the gaming experience for players. Based on feedback from the PA Lottery Insiders community, Lottery officials are able to have continuous conversations with players who help the Lottery de-risk decisions, accelerate innovation, and responsibly generate funds for vital senior programs in the commonwealth.

Challenge

The Pennsylvania Lottery needed a way to track the impact of new product launches that occur multiple times a month across various product categories. Since its business is driven by frequent new game launches in the Scratch-Off (60+ a year) and Fast Play (24+ a year) game categories, the Lottery's products team needed a way to fairly, quickly, and concisely gather specific feedback from players about current games in order to optimize future game development.



The biggest value in having the PA Lottery Insiders is the ability to obtain critical insights and make the results more directly relatable to stakeholders in real time. This is possible by having fast, agile access to a large group of richly profiled players, who want to give feedback on an ongoing basis.



Craig Troop
Deputy Director of Research
Pennsylvania Lottery

⋮ **Accelerating innovation by involving customers early in product lifecycle**

⋮ **De-risking expensive product innovation decisions**

Solution

Consent-Based Product Feedback

In 2017, the Pennsylvania Lottery started collaborating with Vision Critical to administer its PA Lottery Insiders community on Vision Critical's Sparq customer insights online platform. Lottery officials use this platform to evaluate and track their frequent, new product launches, optimize games, and build player feedback into the full product life cycle. In 2018, Lottery officials conducted 34 activities with their Insiders, and invited each member to attend about two events each month. Prior to 2017, the Lottery did not have a cost-effective solution for conducting this type of timely, recurring game research. By using its engaged Insiders community of lottery enthusiasts, Lottery leaders are able to gather actionable intel without burdensome or laborious traditional surveys, which require repetitive collection of demographic information, or costly focus groups.

Continuous and Targeted Conversations

The Pennsylvania Lottery has fast, agile access to 12,000+ players who volunteer to give ongoing feedback, and are richly profiled and highly engaged. By leveraging progressive profiling, PA Lottery staff is able to target conversations and activities towards smaller segments of players who they know play specific games. Lottery teams have also been able to use this progressive profiling to pinpoint a very small player segment that had played a newer type of lottery game in the industry called Xpress Sports in Pennsylvania. By using the Insiders community for recruitment, the PA Lottery was able to organize four highly engaged focus groups across two major cities in Pennsylvania to discuss opinions about the new types of games. This would have been nearly impossible to accomplish through traditional channels.

Realizing Strategic Objectives of the Organization

The Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Lottery, Drew Svitko, always challenges the organization to be convenient, relevant, ubiquitous, and modern. With the help of its PA Lottery Insiders, the Lottery has been able to realize all four of these strategic objectives. It now has a convenient platform for players to share their voice. This platform gives the PA Lottery an opportunity to present relevant topics and build on what is already known with progressive profiling, while including player feedback at an earlier stage than was ever possible. The platform enables the Lottery to talk with players throughout its large and diverse state simultaneously on whatever device a player chooses, allowing the PA Lottery to take a very modern approach to research that goes beyond simply managing individual projects to develop a new tool for its strategic toolbox.

Insiders Provide More Constructive Feedback

The Pennsylvania Lottery conducted a research study on the awareness of its PA iLottery online gaming platform. The Lottery's Director of New Media Matt Beddow was concerned that results from engaging players from the insight community would be more positive than a sample from the general population. The team decided to conduct a side-by-side study with PA Insiders and the general population to compare results, which revealed that the insight community members were, in fact, more aware of iLottery's online presence, because they're core players and more likely to notice advertising.



When stakeholders have a question or a need to know, we can ask our highly-engaged community and get answers quickly to better inform business decisions.



Carol Powanda
Research Analyst
Pennsylvania Lottery

At the same time, the likability ratings and feedback on promotions from the Insiders were more critical and constructive. Players in the community know that the Pennsylvania Lottery is listening and acting on their insight, so they take the time to give feedback that is more detailed. In the future, the PA Lottery will begin to ask its Insiders community for feedback on its online games through PA iLottery.

Real-Time Stakeholder Involvement

In order to manage its workflow, which includes a large number of yearly activities, the PA Lottery uses a spreadsheet to track topics, stakeholder information, and key milestones to accomplish. Lottery staff use the spreadsheet to gather specifications, which are carried over to the final report. The Lottery also provides real-time access to results for key stakeholders and works with them as partners to brainstorm future insight needs. In turn, the Lottery has strong buy-in from its marketing team to drive topics that cover product development, advertising effectiveness, and awareness challenges.

One of the first questions the business now asks about any decisions related to players is: how can the PA Lottery Insiders provide insight, context, or ideation that will help ensure the best decision possible? Since its inception in 2017, the research team has strategically championed the PA Lottery Insiders within their C-suite by demonstrating the quick, actionable insights they have derived from various product and advertising-related studies. The research team has worked closely with the Lottery's product development team to utilize its players' voice as the driver of new product optimizations.

Outcome

Accelerating Innovation and Optimizing Games

Pennsylvania Lottery players lead the product innovation life cycle by sharing their insights directly with business leaders at the beginning of the product's life cycle rather than simply indicating their preferences through their purchase decisions at the end. As new or enhanced product features become part of new game launches for either Scratch-Off or Fast Play tickets, this continuous feedback allows the Pennsylvania Lottery to continue the conversation with its players about which features, styles, and value propositions are most relevant and motivating to drive a purchase decision. This methodology, combined with the high frequency of game launches, allows the PA Lottery to continually optimize the games to meet the ever-changing expectations of players and measure how new features, styles, or value propositions resonate with players.

De-Risking Decisions

The Pennsylvania Lottery bases many of its product and marketing decisions on feedback from Insiders today. Its Insiders community has a positive and proven impact on the organization, as shown by the number of repeat internal stakeholders who return with new questions, looking for new insights. Before the launch of PA Lottery Insiders, the Lottery did not have the resources to make the players' voice (or the data derived from it) the driver of so many business decisions.

Increasing Revenue

The Pennsylvania Lottery continues to be an industry leader. In the 2018-19 Fiscal Year, it sold a record of more than \$4.5 billion in games from which it paid a record of more than \$2.9 billion in prizes to winners and, for the eighth consecutive year, generated more than \$1 billion to benefit older Pennsylvanians. Per capita, the PA Lottery is among top five in the country for Scratch-Off sales. And if that's not enough, in the 2018-19 fiscal year, which began July 1, 2018, their top line sales exceeded estimates by nearly 1 percent, and improved more than 7 percent over the prior year.

Takeaways

Optimizing games with consent-based feedback



Strategic business decisions primarily focused on the players



More constructive and trusted product and marketing insights

About Pennsylvania Lottery

The Pennsylvania Lottery is the only state Lottery that designates all of its proceeds to programs that benefit older residents. For the 8th consecutive year, the Pennsylvania Lottery delivered more than \$1 billion for senior programs. These programs include things like property tax and rent rebates, transportation, care services, prescription assistance, and local services including senior centers and meals.

About Vision Critical

Vision Critical builds customer trust and creates new business value through the collection and application of consent data. With its unique, relationship-based approach, Vision Critical's Sparq platform lets brands directly interact with insight communities of opted-in customers. Unlike traditional voice of customer methods, Vision Critical unlocks the real-time feedback that companies need to build better products, deliver better services, and achieve better business outcomes hand in hand with their own highly engaged, well-profiled customers.

Hundreds of high-performing organizations across multiple industries benefit from Vision Critical's technology and guidance. To learn more about Vision Critical, follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#), or visit us at www.visioncritical.com.