Product management practice in live service games: a Schatzkian case study

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Abstract

This paper aims to adopt Theodore Schatzki´s practice theory to understand how product management is practiced in live service games. The Schatzkian perspective allowed the researchers to explore the practice as a social practice instead of a formal role, in so that they gained access to day-to-day product management in a live game for empirical research in a mid-size video game company and conducted semi-structured interviews following a single case study methodology. We identified three practice-arrangement bundles that describe the flow of the work for a product manager: determining, implementing and evaluating; those practices are performed simultaneously or as a cycle, confirming that product management is a role that organizations should define according to their context, contemplating flexibility and fluidity on the creation of career paths and onboarding for new entrants to the role. This research is among the first to introduce practice theory to product management and video game studies, and opens up the discussion for a new perspective on the development of video games, an industry facing stagnation in growth, challenges of a mature market, and lack of visibility in managerial practices.

Keywords

Product management, video games, practice theory, live service games

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Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, video games have been constantly evolving and adapting to new technologies, attained a global reach, impacted culture, and enabled social interaction; moreover, as an industry, they also face the uncertainty of profit generation as other cultural products do: "Only a small number of cultural products make a profit" (Goh *et al.*, 2023). Specifically, in free-to-play games, fewer than 1 in 250 mobile titles (< 0.4%) sustain the retention needed for positive cash-flow (Sigg *et al.*, 2016). Sensor Tower blog, in 2022, reported that the top 1% of mobile-game publishers capture 93% of all consumer spending (Cruz, 2022).

> [This concentration of sales among a small number of titles or hits] must cover the production costs of a large number of products that fail to make a profit. The primary reason for this level of risk is that consumer tastes in cultural commodities are driven by irrational factors like fashion and style more than need and are thus highly unpredictable (Kerr, 2006).

The dynamic interplay of technological change, consumer tastes, and the complex networks of professionals from various disciplines and nationalities working collaboratively on temporary projects (Creus *et al.*, 2020) sets a complex and dynamic business environment. Nevertheless, there is a generalized misconception: that artists, designers and programmers are the talent creating all the value. The business leaders, producers and other roles involved in a game's success have not received the same attention, and there is little information about how they make the decisions that shape the products and the industry. "How people think and make decisions in this industry is full of unexamined clichés" (Van Dreunen, 2020).

In the games production, beyond the most visible archetypal triad—the programmer, the designer and the artist—, a fourth central role is identified: the producer, whose job is to ensure that the development team gets the project done, on time and on budget (Whitson *et al.*, 2021). "In game development, the project manager is the game producer" (Aleem *et al.*, 2016). The matter here is that games are not anymore a project that has a beginning and an end: the industry has shifted to a service-oriented approach, and GaaS (Game-as-a-Service) has become a dominant model in the gaming industry (Wilhelmsson *et al.*, 2022). The terms `GaaS´ and `Live Service Games´ (LSGs) are used interchangeably in this document, and, along it, we will use the latter.

While the LSG model has transformed game development, it has also introduced significant coordination and decision-making challenges. Teams must manage frequent deployments, integrate player analytics and respond to unpredictable players' behaviors and monetization pressures. Within this dynamic environment, product management (hence forward PMgmt) plays a key role in shaping the games direction and their commercial outcomes (Gaargi, 2025). Yet, unlike in other software industries, PMgmt in games remains loosely defined, with limited consensus on its scope, tools and authority.

This research addresses that gap. Drawing on Schatzki's theory of social phenomenon (Schatzki, 2025), we examine how PMgmt is enacted within LSG studios. Rather than approaching it as a fixed role, we treat it as a nexus of practices bundled with material arrangements such as analytics dashboards, task boards, roadmap and scrum rituals. Specifically, we ask: How product management is practiced in Live Service Games?

To answer this, we use Schatzki's concept of practice-arrangement bundles—knots of activities, artefacts and shared meanings—, and trace five core types of relations that encompass them: causal, pre-figurative, constitutive, intentional and intelligible (Schatzki, 2012). The aim is not to define PMgmt universally, but to describe empirically how it is done:

what people do, what tools they use, and how meaning, structure and action emerge in context.
In this paper we interchangeably call the people playing a game `players´ or `users´, and we will use Ebert's description (2014) of successful PMgmt: delivering the right products at the right time for the right markets.

The paper is structured as follows: The Background section provides theoretical support on LSG, PMgmt and Schatzki's practice theory, to set the foundation for understanding the categories and criteria used in the data analysis. Then we describe Methodology, Data Collection and Analysis, Discussion and Findings, to finally present Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research.

Background

Live service games (LSG): from one-off products to live services
Freemium has become a *de facto* business model for online services (Hamari *et al*., 2017). Free-to-play (F2P) is the monetization model associated with freemium in the video game context, and the terms are used interchangeably and described as a business model, not only as a monetization model. In F2P, the game is free upfront, but generates revenue via continuous in-game purchases, displaying ads or selling subscriptions over time; nevertheless, some LSG games charge for initial access if they already have a solid player base and brand loyalty (Vasiuk, 2024).

As Vasiuk (2024) expressed, a LSG implies a profound shift in the game development approach. The author stated that it is not just adding new content: it involves changing the operational and development culture, including the adoption of live operations practices (live ops), which become an integral part of any F2P game and impact it from the design to the go-to-market strategy.

According to Vasiuk (2024), managing a LSG implies keeping players engaged over long periods by regularly releasing new content and features, balancing monetization strategies to avoid alienating players while maximizing revenue potential, and ensuring that players expectations are consistently met through insight from analytics. Vaudour & Heinze (2020) added that managers need to be flexible and adaptable in their operations, which include supporting and managing the live team effectively; and Dubois & Weststar (2022) included them into the responsibilities of strategic planning.

Given the diversity and complexity of the tasks involved in managing a LSG, analyzing managerial practices in the appropriate context is the starting point to understand those

practice nuances empirically in a setting where the practitioners identities are deeply connected to the projects they work on (Dubois & Weststar, 2022).

Product management in games: An under-examined but strategic role

Although attention to game product management (GPM) in the literature is scarce, software product management (SPM) literature offers the closest match. According to Ebert (2014), a project manager (PM) is responsible for overseeing the product strategy, the planning and the monitoring results; the author stated that this role is crucial to navigate the complexities of product development and to ensure alignment with the organizational goals, holding accountability for the product's success.

Although research on LSG do not directly mention a role like a product manager (PM), some authors have highlighted the need of a role of this nature to coordinate the efforts and ensure alignment with the business goals of the different teams, including developers, marketers and community managers. Authors such Dubois & Weststar (2022) and Weststar & Dubois (2023) have named it as a producer or project manager as the needed role. Leading cross-functional work is a key software product management responsibility (Kittlaus, 2022; Springer *et al.*, 2023), and it overlaps with what is described for a producer or project management in LSG. According to Vasiuk (2024), other roles that need to be coordinated while operating a LSG, and that can also overlap in functions with a game product management (GPM), are content production and management, operations management, data integration and analysis, marketing and promotion, player engagement and retention, and communication management.

Agile methodologies, in particular Scrum, are widely used in game development (Aleem *et al.*, 2016). Under agile frameworks, the product owner (PO) role appears as one related or overlapping with game product management (GPM). Springer *et al.* (2023) reported that, in many software companies, "the product owner is very often held by product managers," but scaling issues arise when he is expected to cover the whole product strategy as well. The authors' Scrum Guide (2023) introduced the PO as an individual whose duty is to ensure a "high availability of a representative of the customers," and is responsible for prioritizing the backlog, so the team delivers business value each sprint.

Clarity in the roles of the PM and the PO is crucial, because their responsibilities, while overlapping, are distinct. The PM's role encompasses a broader spectrum of activities, including strategy, market entry and product evolution; whereas the PO focuses on maximizing product value and managing the product backlog (Springer & Miler, 2018). Toikkanen *et al.* (2023) explained that role clarity between a PO and a PM is context dependent, and stated that the PM role lacks a universally accepted definition, though it is generally agreed that he should own the product and its lifecycle processes.

In this sense, the lack of definition and clarity in the role is an opportunity to use Schatzki's practice theory perspective, where practices "overlap, interweave, cohere, conflict, diverge, scatter and enable, as well constrain each other" (Schatzki, 2002a; 2002b).

Schatzki's practice theory: A conceptual and empirical model to understand game product management (GPM)

Loscher *et al.* (2019) described Schatzki's practices theory as a way of understanding how everyday human activities create and maintain the social world—including organizations—, considering organizational life as a dynamic process where the ongoing activities performed by practitioners and their relations and interactions with inanimate physical or digital objects, plus the context in which the actions happens, continuously shape and reshape the world around.

Schatzki (2002a; 2002b) defined the following concepts: *practice*, a "temporally evolving, open-ended set of doings and sayings linked by practical understandings, rules, teleoaffective structure, and general understandings;" *sites*, "arenas or broader sets of phenomena as part of which something exists or occurs;" *rules*, "explicit formulations that prescribe, require or instruct that such and such be done or said;" *teleoaffective structure*, "an array of ends, projects, uses (of things) and even emotions that are acceptable or prescribed for participants in the practice;" *practical understandings*, "knowing how to carry out desired actions through basic doings and sayings;" and *general understandings*, "abstract senses, … they are not ends for which people strive, bust senses of the worth, value, nature or place of things."

A *practice-arrangement* bundle refers to the combination of everyday activities (practices) and to the physical or material settings in which these activities take place. Essentially, it is a package that brings together how things are done and where they occur (Schatzki, 2005). Examples of practice-arrangement bundles are going shopping in a grocery store, having a meeting or having a farewell party (Loscher *et al.*, 2019).

Methodology: a revelatory exploratory case study

This research adopted a qualitative case study approach, focusing on an in-depth examination of a single game development company implementing PMgmt in LSG context. According to Yin (2018), a single-case study is appropriate when it represents a `revelatory case´—a situation where the researcher has an opportunity to observe a phenomenon that was previously inaccessible to scientific inquiry. The research meets that criterion: we were granted insider access to the PMgmt practice in a video game company with development and publishing capacities installed.

The video game company is anonymized in this study as `the Company´, and was selected because of the following reasons: 1) has a portfolio of several games based on the LSG model;

2) has been in the game development business for more than twenty years; 3) has faced the challenges associated with scaling and growth; 4) has implemented the PMgmt function; and 4) has a people centric approach to work. The selected company characteristics, in particular its PMgmt function, can be understood through the organized activities of multiple people which, according to Schatzki (2012), are the understanding of the important features of human life as rooted in practices.

Data collection

One of the researchers has been working as a general manager for the Company for more than two years, and the whole group of researchers has been working through their MBA in analyzing different aspects of the Company such as strategy and market analysis under signed non-disclosure agreements (NDAs).

Semi-structured interviews were utilized to develop a rich understanding of PMgmt practice in LSG, enabled triangulation of the findings (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018) and allowed access to participants' perspectives. The aim was to capture their `sayings´, `understandings´ and experiences (`doings´, `teleoaffectivity´) related to PMgmt activities and decision-making, particularly those concerning the organizing dimensions outlined by Schatzki (2002a; 2002b).

Participants were selected via purposive sampling (Patton, 2015), targeting the individuals central to PMgmt within the Company. The sample comprised product managers (n = 4) from games monetizing with the F2P model, the chief operation officer (n = 1) and the product managers coach (n = 1), totaling six participants.

This focused sample provided insights from the core practitioners and strategic oversight roles. The principle of theoretical saturation (Guest *et al.*, 2006) conceptually guided the adequacy of the data gathered. Interviews, lasting up to one-hour maximum, were conducted via video conferencing, audio-recorded with explicit consent and transcribed verbatim.

A single, core semi-structured interview guide based on Schatzki's theory towards understanding PMgmt practice was carried out, extracting the interviewers' doings, sayings and organizing dimensions: rules, understandings and teleoaffectivity, especially those concerning decision-making. Consistent with best practices (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 1995), questions and probes were adapted based on each participant's specific role. Researcher memos were written immediately in the post-interviews.

Data analysis

The data analysis began by segmenting interview transcripts into verbatim responses corresponding to each question posed to both product managers and executives. Each set of answers was then systematically analyzed through the lens of Schatzki's site ontology (Schatzki, 2005; Loscher *et al.*, 2019), with primary attention given to a pre-defined theoretical focus for the question asked. Following this initial analysis, a cross-interview synthesis was performed to identify common themes across all participant responses. These themes were then used to populate each of Schatzki's main categories—practices, teleoaffective structures, general understandings, practical understandings, rules and material arrangements (Schatzki, 2005)—, providing a comprehensive view of the constituent elements of PMgmt practice at the Company (Loscher *et al.*, 2019). This action resulted in a set of tables available in the Appendix section.

After the themes were identified, a master quote sheet was created and verbatims were codified by participant, question and verbatim. For the rest of the article, we used the code P[#]Q[#]V[#], to reference what participants said in the interviews.

Findings

The data analysis revealed that customer value is transversal to all the aspects of PMgmt and is usually described as the issue to determine, implement and evaluate. Participant 5 explained: "so the right thing is generally what the customer wants." Participant 6 added: "My role [as a PM] is just make sure we're working on the right thing." Similarly, Participant 1 noted: "their job [PM] is to make sure the right thing gets delivered by the deadline." Participant 4 described it in terms of delivery goals: "the sprint goal will be `here's the piece of value we need to deliver... ´." The empirically grounded themes revealed three recursive practices-arrangement bundles that organize PMgmt work. Below we present each and show how Schatzki's practice and material relations manifest within them.

Determining what is the right thing to do, agree on the next player-value hypotheses and explain why it matters

> The deciding phase begins when a one-pager gains leadership sign-off. This artefact causes the product team to treat a specific chunk of work as `planning-ready´. As participant 5 described: "there's usually a meeting to present the one-pager… then it turns into executing on that, once the plan has been brought from the sprint planning." Opportunity-scanning tools then shape what enters the roadmap. For example, a recent player-survey prefigured the shortlist of seasonal live-events by surfacing unmet desires for collaborative quests. In the voice of participant 5: "we've taken a much more… let's ensure that we have a competitive edge… doing detailed market

research." These communicating and identifying activities converge on a single telos: establishing what player value to pursue next and why the studio believes it matters. Once this shared value delivering hypothesis is articulated, the practice spills into implementation.

Implementing the right thing within the current constraints and ship the agreed value into the live game within the committed window with the agreed quality

Implementation pivots on artefacts that coordinate work across specialties. The updated roadmap prefigures next-week tasks and fixes non-negotiable deadlines for every function. According to participant 5: "The product manager's roadmaps and plans are the containers that will dictate to a large degree what all the support teams will be trying to deliver on." When QA (quality assurance) rejects a build, the failure makes quality risk intelligible: the PM immediately pauses the plan to decide the next move. Intelligibility is key, as participant 6 recounted: "we found a bug in our game and we're currently building a new release… I had to decide whether or not I was going to stop the QA process." Daily progress reports from the developers constitute the key information stream the PM uses to judge sprint health. Participant 6 explained: "day-to-day stuff... I handle the prioritization of the tasks, figure out the requirements of it, interrogate the team, take that task and figure out how to run it through a sprint or a kanban (a visual board or a sign), and then all the way to testing and release." At times, conflict is leveraged deliberately: when a UX (user experience) designer disagrees with a game designer, the PM intentionally recasts the clash as a learning opportunity, reinforcing the use of the data and evidence available to present his arguments. Participant 6 observed: "yeah, I mean people can disagree... we try and use data to ground those decisions, present objective fact and try and use evidence to make sure that his arguments are both correct and free from bias." Through these communicative, identifying and understanding doings, the team converts agreed intents into a shippable output inside the organizational constraints, setting the stage for systematic evaluation.

Evaluate whether the correct decision was made to determine whether and why the submitted change achieved its KPI (key performance indicator)

Accessible data in a live game are indispensable for judging whether a player-value hypothesis is confirmed. Participant 6 emphasized: "you need to have access to the data; otherwise, you are kind of like you're in the dark," underscoring that live ops PM work cannot exist without dashboards, and that those dashboards also render performance intelligible. Participant 1 remarked: "being able to track essentially your own performance and being able to do something in the game and prove without a doubt that the thing you did was the thing that created the uplift."

> A stream of player reviews offers another lens: the PM intentionally mines social networks for pain-points, turning raw sentiment into design leads. Participant 4 shared: "by reading all of the reviews and looking at what our users are saying on Reddit and Discord, I'm getting an understanding of where their pain points are." Finally, the monthly product-review prefigures future autonomy: strong results build executive trust, while weak ones trigger closer oversight. As participant 5 noted: "product reviews… we will present to the wider set of, let's say, the people connected to the product… how the title is performing." Through these evaluation doings, the team closes the loop, feeding fresh evidence back into `Determining´: one of the three interconnected practices mentioned.

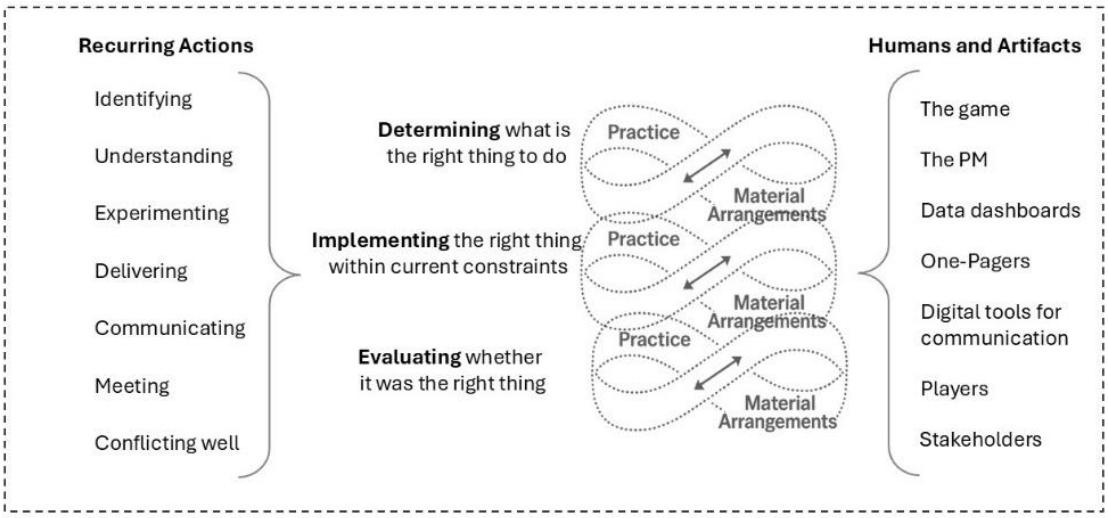
As a site to practice PMgmt, the LSG portraits the activity of the whole Company toward satisfying the clients and gravitating around two central entities: the game and the player. This site differs from other customer-centric sites because the people participating in the activity are passionate about what they do. On the data classification, the teleoaffective structure `Passion/Intrinsic Motivation´ (TS04 in the Appendix section), and the general understanding `Games' Intrinsic Value´ (GU01) are a pattern in all the activities and functions as a pervasive normative and affective background that underpins engagement across all bundles. Participant 4 expressed: "for me, it comes down to passion... working in games as a hobby is enjoyable, something new every day."

The identified bundles can be happening simultaneously or can be seeing as a cycle. Those practices evolve and the activities associated with them are not defined: they configure themselves according to the context, which is an ever changing technological environment, with feedback received daily from players, peers, experts and enthusiasts. In particular, in LSG, the product is never finished. Participant 6 described it as follows: "the big difference in the live service games is that you used to put a game out and you'd release it, and then you were done. The game I'm on at the moment has been live for six years now and nothing ever stops. You're always working, the game is never finished."

The group of bundles described in this section captures the Determine-Implement-Evaluate practices nexus where the Identifying, Understanding, Experimenting, Delivering, Communicating, Meeting and Conflicting wells are recurrent activities and take different forms and meaning depending on the setting they are performed. Figure 1 shows a graphical representation, including the recurring activities and the key humans and artefacts involved in the bundles described.

Figure 1

Product management nexus of practices in the LSG setting



Discussion: a recursive, materially entangled practice system

This paper sought to answer the question How is PMgmt practiced in a live service game. We analyzed it as a social phenomenon following Theodore Schatzki's ontological lenses, which demonstrated value in helping us think without assigning causality to hierarchies or systems in the Company studied. Focusing on people's activities and the materials they use to perform their work, allowed us to move beyond doing a description of roles and responsibilities, towards a deeper understanding of PMgmt.

As Toikkanen *et al.* (2023) stated, if clarity on the PO and the PM roles depends on the context, but is critical for the practice to be executed effectively (Paranhos & Santos, 2024), defining PMgmt is complex because it is not a static function: it is a dynamic and interconnected web of activities that could be best understood as a nexus of practice-arrangement bundles (Schatzki, 2005; Loscher *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, we propose that three interconnected practices comprehensively describe the practice of PMgmt in LSG:

1. Determining what is the right thing to do.
2. Implementing the right thing within current constraints.
3. Evaluating whether it was the right thing.

It is fundamental to relate these practices to the description of effective PMgmt, which entails getting right the product, the right time and the right market; yet, we extend it to discovering them through iterations and experiments, taking care of the implementation to not derail in the process that involves navigating conflicting perspectives of art, innovation, finances and unpredictable players desires, and, finally, understanding what happened in the process of learning and continue asking whether the PM gets it right or not.

Practical insights

The empirical evidence collected supports the fluidity of the PMgmt surfaced by other authors and contributes with a fresh perspective that will allow practitioners to understand that the expectations of their work should be agreed upon and discussed. These expectations will change according to the situation, but are always driven by determining, implementing and evaluating whether they did the right thing.
Our findings highlight the need for the Company to support the development of practical understandings through mentorship and reflective practice, and clarify and consistently apply rules and formal processes like the one-pager, an artifact that can be widely communicated to all the people involved and thoroughly evaluated once the users' interaction with the product starts.

Conclusion

The Schatzkian perspective allowed us to acknowledge the significant teleoaffective dimensions of the role, including both the value of intrinsic motivation for making games and the cognitive load of navigating uncertainty, constant failures or not getting things right against a few epic but trifling victories.

It is essential to mention that reconciling the executives' teleoaffective goal for the PMgm of financial ownership and setting strategic frames could conflict with the PM's focus on the practical understanding required to translate those frames and the affective responsibility of implementing and delivering value to users, while maintaining the team's well-being.

This social perspective observed revealed the need for constant interchange and tutoring, and the encouragement of developing the capacity to handle conflicts appropriately and having deep conversations among the people involved in the making of the product. New entrants in the role will need collaboration of key people in the Company that will help them develop strategic thinking before being tasked with developing a product strategy.

The PM's role in LSGs is a continuously open conversation; responsibilities change and the entanglement with the digital artefacts like the game itself, the platforms to publish, the code, the data dashboard; and the meeting software creates a myriad of possibilities that could cause lack of standardization and *ad hoc* practices that will difficult the scoping the work, communicating to a broader public, evaluating the results of the initiatives and scaling the Company. However, in as much as its recognition is important, it should not block the dynamic assemblage of temporally unfolding this materially mediated practice to keep the innovation engine working.

In an environment characterized by uncertainty and evolving processes, the PM's ability to exercise adaptive judgment, facilitate teams, and translate abstract strategy into concrete action is paramount, often taking precedence over rigid adherence to formal rules.

Limitations

This research, while grounded in a single-case design, offers deep empirical insight into the dynamics of PMgmt in live service games (LSGs). As with an all case-based research, its findings are context-specific and not intended for broad statistical generalization. Nonetheless, the analytical depth and theoretical framing contribute transferable knowledge that may inform similar organizational contexts.

The reliance on semi-structured interviews provided access to the practitioners' lived experiences and reflective interpretations of their work, while additional data sources—planning artifacts or observational field notes—might have offered complementary perspectives. The richness and coherence of the interview narratives supported a robust analysis aligned with the study's exploratory goals.

Finally, the researchers' dual role as internal actors and academic analysts presents both a strength and a challenge. This position enabled privileged access and contextual sensitivity, but also required continuous reflexivity to ensure analytical rigor.

Further research

Building on the insights generated by this case, future research could further explore the interplay between practice-based perspectives and PMgmt in LSGs through comparative or multi-site studies. Expanding the empirical base beyond a single organization would allow for a broader pattern recognition and potential theory refinements.

Longitudinal studies could be especially valuable in tracing how practices of product discovery and delivery evolve over time in response to shifting technological, organizational or market dynamics. Similarly, mixed-methods approaches—combining interviews, document analysis and ethnographic observations—could enrich the understanding of the socio-material configurations that shape the day-to-day decision-making in live game environments.

Finally, there is room for further inquiry into the role of organizational learning, power relations and identity negotiation within cross-functional product teams. Integrating lenses from organizational sociology, cognitive anthropology or critical management studies may yield new insights into the evolving nature of collaborative work in digital product ecosystems.

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Appendix

The following tables are the result of the data analysis and portrait the common themes that characterize the practice of PMgmt in a LSG context.

A. Practices (doings and sayings). The core work of product managers and the activities overseen or expected by executives are captured in these common practices

CODE	ACTIVITIES	DEFINITION
P01	Planning strategically	Encompasses defining vision, road-mapping and creating milestone plans, involving both PMs and executives in setting and translating direction.
P02	Communicating with stakeholders	Regular interaction, pitching ideas, sharing information, presenting performance, and ensuring alignment with stakeholders at various levels.
P03	Aligning the team	Practices focused on guiding the development team, ensuring they understand goals, facilitating collaboration (e.g., "swarming") and leading meetings.
P04	Analyzing data	Regularly reviewing KPIs, analytics, and other data sources to monitor performance, identify issues, and inform decisions.
P05	Running agile ceremonies	Utilizing Agile and Scrum ceremonies such as sprint planning, stand-ups, reviews, and retrospectives to manage development and delivery.
P06	Prioritizing work	The crucial practice of managing backlogs, evaluating tasks/features, and deciding what the team should work on next based on value and strategic goals.
P07	Decision-making	The overarching practice of making key product decisions, ranging from day-to-day operational calls to significant strategic choices regarding features and direction.
P08	Managing risks	Identifying, assessing, and mitigating various risks (market, technical, executional), often through portfolio strategies or early validation techniques.

B. Teleoaffective structures The motivations, goals and emotional underpinnings of PMgmt work are consistently evident.

CODE	SUB-CATEGORY	DEFINITION
TS01	Product success goal	The primary end is achieving overall product success, encompassing financial performance, market positioning ("winning"), and player engagement.
TS02	Value delivery focus	A core purpose is to identify, define, and ensure the delivery of "the right thing" that provides tangible "value" to customers and the business.
TS03	Strategic alignment drive	A strong motivation and goal is to ensure all product work, decisions, and team efforts are aligned with and effectively execute the broader product and company strategy.
TS04	Passion/Intrinsic motivation	A powerful affective driver, especially for PMs, of personal passion for video games, viewing the work as an extension of a hobby and finding it inherently fun.
TS05	Felt responsibility	A significant affective orientation involves a strong sense of responsibility towards the product, the team, and the achievement of outcomes.
TS06	Navigating uncertainty	The task of making decisions and planning in a fluid, often uncertain environment is a recognized, mentally demanding aspect of the role.
TS07	Efficiency drive	A motivation towards optimizing processes, "shortening the path from idea to delivery," and removing "unnecessary overhead."

C. General understandings of shared beliefs, values and assumptions provide crucial context for PMgmt practices

CODE	SUB-CATEGORY	DEFINITION
GU01	Games' intrinsic value	The understanding, especially among PMs, that working in game development is inherently more meaningful or desirable than in other industries.
GU02	Dynamic role/Games	A recognition that video games are distinct, "alive," or "constantly transforming" products, requiring the PM role to be adaptive and versatile.
GU03	Customer focus	Product decisions and the definition of value should be fundamentally centered around the "customer" or "player experience".
GU04	Data importance	A widespread understanding of the critical role of data, research, and evidence in informing decisions and resolving debates objectively.
GU05	Strategy as guide	The understanding that strategy acts as a high-level "container" or "lens" providing direction and boundaries, rather than a rigid, detailed script.
GU06	Collaboration value	A fundamental belief in the necessity of extensive communication and collaboration with teams, stakeholders, and across departments.
GU07	Art/Business balance	An understanding of the inherent need to balance creative and artistic goals with commercial objectives and business value in decision-making.
GU08	Context Dependency	The recognition that practices, processes, and strategic application vary significantly based on project context (e.g., new vs. mature, outlier vs. core).

D. Practical understandings. The tacit know-how and embodied skills essential for the PM role

CODE	SUB-CATEGORY	DEFINITION
PU01	Strategic thinking	The ability to interpret strategy, define product vision, identify market opportunities, and translate high-level goals into actionable plans.
PU02	Data interpretation	The skill to analyze KPIs, market data, and user feedback to derive meaningful insights and inform decisions, going beyond surface-level observation.
PU03	Effective communication	Proficiency in pitching ideas, facilitating discussions, translating complex information for diverse audiences, managing stakeholder relationships, and resolving conflict.
PU04	Adaptive judgment	The crucial know-how to assess varied situations (e.g., project risk, team maturity, market conditions) and adapt one's approach and decision-making style.
PU05	Prioritization skill	The practical ability to weigh numerous factors (value, effort, risk, strategic fit) to make effective prioritization decisions for backlogs and roadmaps.
PU06	Team facilitation/leadership	The know-how to guide cross-functional teams, foster collaboration, empower them in implementation decisions, and ensure alignment.

E. Rules. Explicit or clearly articulated prescriptions and procedures structure many aspects of PMgmt

CODE	SUB-CATEGORY	DEFINITION
RU01	Agile ceremonies	The adoption and regular practice of Scrum/Agile rituals (sprints, stand-ups, planning, reviews, retrospectives, backlog grooming) serve as core operational rules.
RU02	Formal documents	The use of specific documents like "one-pagers" and "strategy documents" often follows a rule-based process for proposing, justifying, and approving significant initiatives.

RU03	Meeting cadences	Regularly scheduled meetings (e.g., weekly stakeholder updates, monthly product reviews) function as rule-based interaction points.
RU04	Hierarchical approvals	Established structures of authority that require PMs to seek approval from stakeholders or division heads for major decisions.
RU05	Goal cascading	The process by which high-level company/product goals are given by leadership and then translated by PMs into team-level objectives.

F. Material arrangements (humans & artifacts). The landscape of PMgmt is populated by key human and non-human entities

CODE	SUB-CATEGORY	DEFINITION
M01	Key humans	Product managers, their "teams" (cross-functional), "key stakeholders," "division heads," "executives/CEO," and "users/customers/players".
M02	Central artifact: the game/product	The primary artifact around which all practices and decisions revolve.
M03	Strategic & Planning artifacts	"Strategy documents," "vision statements," "roadmaps," "milestones," "one-pagers," and "project goals" (e.g., revenue targets).
M04	Data & Operational artifacts	"KPIs," "live data," "analytics reports," "market research," "surveys," "backlogs," "Jira tickets," and "sprint goals."
M05	Tools & Platforms (artifacts)	Digital tools for communication (Meet, Slack), task management (Jira), data analysis (Tableau, Excel), documentation (GSuite), and visualization (Figma/Miro).
M06	Meetings as structured events (Artifacts)	Various recurring meetings (stand-ups, reviews, planning sessions, one-pager discussions, stakeholder updates) that serve as pivotal material arrangements.