

CROSSING OVER: BECOMING A COMICS & GAMES SHOP

Many shops are successful in the two category format ... can you be one of them? In this extensive workshop, we look at adding a new category segment to your store and how to do it successfully. You'll learn how to do it right the first time and the pitfalls that can happen when adding games or comics to your shop.

***Presenters: Brendan Boyle (Central Florida's Coliseum of Comics) &
David Wheeler (Austin, TX's Dragon's Lair)***

Monday 10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

Room 328

Bringing Games to the Comic Store Initial Barriers to Entry

Evaluate the need

Do your current customers play games?

Are stores in your area filling a need and are they discounting?

If yes to either of these, what game line is not being made available?

Do I have space?

Some games require more shelf space than others. From smallest to largest: (CCGs) Collectible Card Games, (RPGs) Role-Playing Games, Board Games and (GW) Games Workshop

All in-store gaming is going to require space. CCGs especially will require weekly table space while GW is played on 4'x6' tables

Do I have the resources?

For many games, all you have to do is have the available cash. But to support in-store play you will also need employees that will support the game play as well as flexible hours beyond what you're normally open. Most stores don't initially account for these expenses.



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Types of Games and their Pros and Cons

Overall Pros of games

New customer base, longer shelf life, repeat purchases

Overall Cons of carrying games:

Shorter discounts, space demands, need for employee support

Collectible Card Games

Relatively low space requirement and decent sell through, but requires game play space and employee resources.

Fairly low startup investment and customers buy packs in multiples, but old sets of cards are very slow to sell.

Short discount and customers can buy discounted boxes online but pack sales are where most of your sales come from.

Manufacturers support in-store play by offering brick and mortar stores special incentives, but manufacturers never take into account your true cost of supporting their product with employees, scheduling tournaments (Friday Night Magic rarely ends before 11 pm), reporting results and square footage allocated to hosting CCG tournaments.

Support sales include single card sales, deck sleeves, deck boxes, life counters and playmats are all available at better discounts.

Role Playing Games

Easy to display but equal to carrying a full line of hardcover graphic novels.

Much like *Magic the Gathering*, *Dungeons and Dragons* is a well-known property that continues to harvest new players and bring back old players.

There is a significant expense to carrying RPGs but you can cheat by carrying the core books and new releases of the lines you wish to carry and RPG players are usually good about special ordering books that they are interested in.

RPG players are always looking for players. Use bulletin boards, meetup.com, newsletters and in-store gaming to attract new customers. The downside to this is most all RPGs are available (either legally or illegally) online for free or very cheap and if one gamer knows where to find the PDF, all of them will.

Support sales include Dice, lots of dice, play mats, map packs and miniatures



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Board Games

Very nice packaging but odd shapes and sizes require a larger amount of space to properly display.

Getting together with friends and a good game is at an all time high

What to carry initially can be gleaned from industry sources but check with your distributor on the discount levels. Games range from 50% off SRP to 40% off. Make sure the games you carry and promote are offering you proper discounts and/or demos.

Avoid (at least initially) mass-market games—you cannot compete pricewise and customers are not looking for you to be carrying Clue.

Support sales include Dice, card protectors and expansions

Miniature Gaming

As an accessory to role-playing, (Reaper, *D&D* and *Star Wars*) these can be great additions to games or can be played on their own.

HeroClix is a stand-alone game that does get crossover support from comic customers but most comic customers still do not play games.

HeroClix product generally includes free product to incentivize in-store purchases.

Support sales include Dice, singles and maps

Games Workshop – Warhammer 40K and Warhammer Fantasy

Very nice product with regular new releases that provides a loyal customer base but takes a great amount of retail space as well as 4'x6' tables customized for in-store game play.

Company provides tournament support and retail displays but has a very short discount.

They do not allow any retailer to post prices online.

GW provides good customer service but having an employee on staff that knows the product is essential to selling the product.

Support sales include paints, brushes, dice, terrain and glue.

Privateer Press – War Machine

Provides retailers an answer to GWs short discounts but does not draw the same player base.

Like Games Workshop, it needs an employee enthusiast to sell the product.

Support sales include paints, brushes, dice, terrain and glue.



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In conclusion, if you are still considering whether to carry games

Frustrations exist in any industry.

Expect them here as well, just more often.

Product distribution, tournament distribution and short discounts are the norm and communication is trying at best.

This industry has great growth potential but it's not happening overnight. All game stores need to work to change things, but if you're prone to high blood pressure, it's best not to get into the industry

Make things easier for yourself!

Preorders. Take them and fill them. Get a deposit with the order or offer an incentive for coming in on release week of the product. These are not comic customers that always visit regularly. Gamers are far more transient until they can find a store they can call home.

Avoid Discounting. You can't compete with online discounters. Offer instead a loyalty card that rewards them over time: free promos, extra product or tournament entries.

Watch out for...

Customer resistance. Especially if you have a small store, don't schedule gaming events on new comic day. As long as you have days when customers can still pick up their comics without having to step over game players, they will adapt to you being a game store

Employee resistance. If any employees don't like the direction of bringing in games, there's probably a number of additional issues with which they aren't happy. In this day, if your store can make more money selling anything, everyone needs to be on board.

Hiring gamers. Just because they know every game does not automatically make them a stellar employee. Make sure they understand that you are there to make a profit and double check to be sure they are capable of scheduling events and reporting when necessary.

Elitist gamers. They are out there. If your store becomes a store of elite gamers that have no time or patience for new players, you now have a clubhouse that new players are not welcome in.

