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CBS enters videogame sector

'Race,' 'Survivor' among 8 planned titles

By [CHRIS MORRIS](#)

Add CBS to the collection of media giants dipping their toes in the videogame waters.

The network's consumer products division has announced plans to collaborate with a variety of game publishers for eight titles based on current and past series.

Two based on the "CSI" franchise are already on store shelves. Games based on "The Amazing Race," "Survivor," "Criminal Minds," "Diagnosis Murder," "The Ghost Whisperer" and "The Hollywood Squares" are due next year.

The games will be available on a varying number of platforms, including the Wii, Nintendo DS, iPhone and iPod Touch.

Mining its portfolio of programs is a relatively low-risk way for the network to explore the gaming world. The financial risk is minimal, since CBS won't be building the games inhouse.

By going with mostly smaller publishers, though, the extent of the possible reward is muted as well. Ubisoft developed the "CSI" games, but lesser-known companies such as Ludia and Legacy Interactive are handling the others. Smaller publishers tend to get less shelf space at retail outlets -- and the titles will face strong competition from the slew of highly anticipated games hitting the market next year.

CBS has explored gaming before. In 2001, the company greenlit a PC game based on "Survivor," as the popularity of the show hit stratospheric heights. Critics savaged the title, and sales were fairly low.

Core gamers aren't the network's target audience, though. The burgeoning number of casual players could work in CBS' favor as people drift toward familiar names and the expected low retail cost of the games.

There's a precedent in networks starting small and growing into powerful gaming forces. Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment spent years licensing games from its Looney Tunes and DC Comics portfolio to publishers, quietly learning the ropes. Today, it's one of the videogame industry's larger publishers.

Twentieth Century Fox, meanwhile, tapped Andre Emerson to become VP of videogame production for its licensing division in September, reflecting that company's growing interest in the sector.

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