Daily Mafia Transforms Zoom Into A Gaming Platform

Chris Stottle, Founder of Daily Mafia

Summary

- Mafia is traditionally an in-person party game
- Daily Mafia is an online virtual Mafia gaming community
- They host all Mafia games on Zoom's high quality video platform

Daily Mafia.com

Back in the days of the Soviet Union, people in the eastern bloc lived in very tightly-packed communities. This kind of structure created the basis for their culture at the time, much of which is still alive in this day. Part of that culture involved playing party games during large gatherings. In 1986, Dmitry Davidoff, a psychologist, designed a game called, which he demonstrated at the Psychology Department of Moscow State University. It didn't take long for this game to become a hit throughout the USSR, let alone the world.

Until recently, Mafia was played exclusively in person. This created a roadblock, since it was difficult to gather a sufficient amount of people in one place. Thanks to Chris Stottle, the founder of Daily Mafia, the game can be played online. Mafia's traditional "night" and "day" modes can be triggered by having players turn off their webcams and then turn them back on when daytime returned. When a player died, he simply turns off his camera. This made it entirely possible to play the game without having to resort to meeting in person. We reached out to Stottle to hear his story and understand how our software plays into all of this.

"Back in August 2013, I'd seen a couple of people playing Mafia live on a game broadcasting service," he said. "I was drawn to their games, and wanted to join them. After I sent a message asking them to let me play, they refused me flatly, giving the reason that they don't let anybody outside their community join their games. This was a huge disappointment, but it was actually just the beginning of my story."

Stottle isn't the kind of person who takes rejection poorly. Despite his disappointment, he decided to transform this situation into something positive. Stottle gathered some of his own acquaintances and decided to play Mafia with them. But instead of making his small community exclusive, he decided to let anyone join in if they wanted to.

This is the story of someone who took the lemons thrown at him and made lemonade. His game quickly became something more than a gathering with a couple of friends. It turned into a full-blown online village of gamers.

"On average, we have between 30 and 50 people who desire to play on any given night, for five to six days of the week," he said. "I personally take off Sundays to spend time with my family, but others take over my responsibilities during that time. Whenever a game grows larger than 25 players, things can get chaotic and people lose interest. As a result, we limit our games to 25 players and move any other interested people into another game session."

As this community grew larger, it seemed rather inconvenient to use the video meeting software they were using at the time. It was becoming more cumbersome as time passed to organize and moderate games on the platform. Stottle had to figure out another way to play Mafia quickly.

"The video meeting software we have used in the past for our games wasn't quite cutting it, particularly because of the poor naming convention," he said. "We needed the ability to see names all of the time. In addition to this, the sound was also poor and the stream wasn't always showing its full potential resolution."

Stottle had to find an online meeting platform that had a better footing in the areas that were crucial to playing a party game.

"When I first observed others playing Mafia on the Internet, they were using Zoom," he said. "After struggling with our original video conferencing software, we decided to take the same route. In our initial tests, we discovered that **Zoom had better audio and video quality than our previous software**. Added to this, the names of our players always appeared in their respective windows, which allowed us to stream our games without having to go through the trouble of editing the streamed video every time a game event would change the player's position on the screen."

There was still a hitch when Daily Mafia started running on Zoom. Player names were not placed permanently in their respective boxes, which was absolutely necessary for a game with this magnitude of people who possibly don't know each other. It was the same issue they had in their previous software, and it was annoying to find workarounds to this. Zoom's team took this to heart and corrected the issue immediately.

"When we first started streaming, we had no way to display player names continuously on their boxes," he said. "Instead, we had to improvise and type up each player's name and place it there manually. And when we first switched over to Zoom, it also wasn't displaying player names. This problem was only made worse by the fact that the camera views for players shifted to the bottom when they turned their webcams off. **Not long after we asked for this feature, it was implemented in the next version**."

Of course, during every switchover, there's always a bit of turbulence. With Zoom, however, Stottle did not experience as much resistance to the change as would be expected from an operation that depends this heavily on video meeting software.

"When we first switched to Zoom, players were skeptical about the software," said Stottle. "They were not very motivated about the change. But once players joined a meeting, they enjoyed how convenient it was to use Zoom. The first things they noticed were the improvement in the video stream quality and how easy it was to join and leave the meeting. Before we made the switch, we didn't have a lot of players. Many of the people that participate in our

games today aren't even aware that we used to use another software for this."

By being the go-to source for playing Mafia on the internet, Daily Mafia has grown to become a brand and a thriving community of more than 200 players. This will soon change as their partnership with a streaming service, twitch.tv, will eventually push them further up the ladder.

"We started as a simple streaming game that invited anyone who wanted to join," said Stottle. "From there, we just kept on growing as a community. In May 2014, the provider we use for streaming video accepted us into a partnership program because we met their requirements in terms of the quantity of viewers and the quality of our stream. At this point, we are making revenue from the advertisements that come from our streaming provider as a result of this partnership. We have also qualified to offer paid subscriptions to our viewers, which allows them to have access to several perks and features that aren't available to normal viewers."

"Daily Mafia has become a brand," he continued. "It may soon transform into a fully sustainable business. We have an ever-growing number of people who join our community and are highly content with how we organize it."

For now, Stottle finds Daily Mafia in the nascent stages of something far greater. It may take some time, but they seem to have made decisions that will take it to a level on par with some of the most popular gaming companies in the world.

Daily Mafia needed a high-quality video and audio stream. It also needed features that the existing software did not have at the time, but implemented soon after the need arose. With Zoom, it was able to have a stable platform with which to develop its community into something promising. As the company that develops this software, we are proud to provide crisp online meetings for the Chris Stottles of the world.

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About Zoom
Zoom, the cloud meeting company, unifies cloud video conferencing, simple web meetings, and group collaboration into one easy-to-use platform. Our solution offers the first available mobile-screen sharing and an innovative hybrid cloud service, and works across desktop, tablet, mobile and room systems. Zoom services over 40 million participants and more than 100,000 businesses globally.

Website
zoom.us

Innovations
First 3-in-1 Cloud HD Meeting Platform
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