

COMMUNITY AWARENESS PROGRAM




ATARI[®]

 A Warner Communications Company

Are Video Games Toys or Teachers?

Why are they so popular?

How do other communities utilize the attributes of video games?

What benefits do games present to our children, in our community?

Coin Video games have been the topic of discussion in many communities.

To gain the answers to these and other questions you and your community group may have, we offer you a video tape entitled "Video Games: A Public Perspective." It presents a national public perspective of video games and the computer industry. Parents, teachers, public officials, young people, psychologists, sociologists and many other com-

munity group members were interviewed in an attempt to present a realistic view of the industry.

If you are interested in scheduling* a viewing of "Video Games: A Public Perspective" and/or booking an industry spokesperson, please fill out the information and return to the Atari Distributor whose address is shown at the bottom of the page.

*Please schedule at least 2 weeks prior to meeting date.

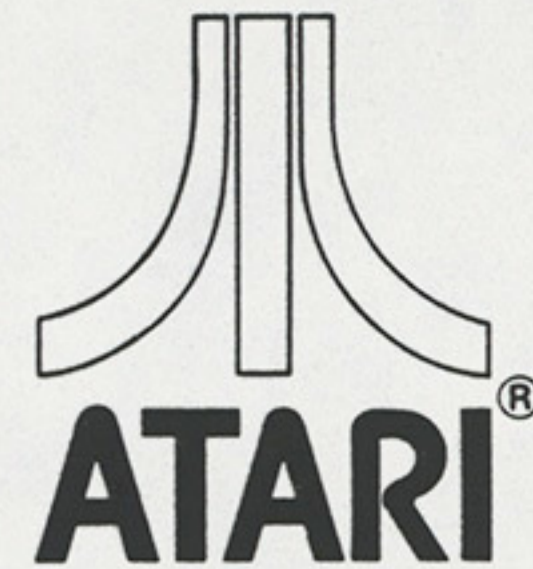
to: Community Awareness Coordinator

Yes I would like to be contacted regarding the Public Perspective program.

Name of Organization		
Address		
City	State	Zip
Phone		
Date	<input type="checkbox"/> Speaker	<input type="checkbox"/> Tape required Contact Person

Distributor Name:

Coin Operated Games Division



Atari Incorporated
1265 Borregas Avenue
PO Box 427
Sunnyvale California 94086
408 745 2000

Dear Operator:

Atari is proud to offer its Community Awareness Program to you as a tool to inform your community about the coin video games industry.

The program was introduced in March of 1982, when the materials were supplied to all Atari distributors. The package includes a 17-minute video tape entitled, "Video Games: A Public Perspective", a position paper synthesizing the major points brought out in the film, and a four-page brochure offering information and tips about presenting the materials to legislative or community groups.

The "Public Perspective" videotape is a comprehensive, objective look at the video games industry. In it, parents, teachers, doctors and community-minded citizens give their views on the impact video games are having on our lifestyles.

The Community Awareness Program has been used successfully in a number of communities as an effective educational and communications tool. The effectiveness is enhanced when an industry member is present to offer first-hand information about the role video games play in their communities.

If you are not presently faced with legislation, the program is an opportunity to educate and possibly prevent problems. Atari distributors have also been supplied with a one-page brochure on the program that can be sent to Rotary Clubs, Parent-Teacher Associations and other civic organizations before a problem occurs.

We encourage your participation and support, and look forward to hearing your comments.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Margaret Lasecke'.

Margaret Lasecke
Public Relations Manager
Coin Video Division

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Jamie Pinto'.

Jamie Pinto
Media Relations Specialist
Coin Video Division

PR PROBLEMS/ PR SOLUTIONS

By
Mike
Bucki

"Atari's Community Awareness Program lies waiting..."

The first 90 seconds grab the viewers as compellingly as any of the best segments of CBS's highly rated *60 Minutes*. Upbeat music begins as the title dissolves into the first series of close-ups. Video game players, young and young at heart, are shown experiencing the delightful anguish of trying to conquer several video challenges.

Suddenly the first set of pro and con comments appear. A middle-aged woman, a grandmotherly type, says, "I don't think they're good for children." On the heels of her doubt comes a cute teenage girl who rebuts with: "I think they're pretty neat. That's what I do in my spare time." Then a middle-aged man blurts the objective: "I don't like the idea of them standing there pumping money into them."

The television collage continues with video game action and players' reactions providing effective and brief visual bridges between sets of pro and con comments. Someone, apparently an industry spokesman (and identified as such moments later), raises the question: "The problem is, and maybe societies haven't dealt with it yet, what do you do with youth when they congregate?"

A tall, handsome, smartly dressed narrator appears on the screen. Standing in front of a pleasant, tree-shaded shopping mall, he tells us, the viewers, that coin videos are turning up all over the country... "in supermarkets, barber shops, doctors offices, and bookstores...even in the jury room at the municipal courthouse of San Jose, California."

The narrator steps meaningfully toward the camera, a television technique that places the actor/reporter comfortably in your living room. "Well naturally we have some questions," he says, using *we* to indicate to *you*, the viewer, that he's on your side, he's one of you.

That impression is quickly reinforced. "Where do these games come from?" he asks, and quickly adds: "What effect do they have on the players? And what happens when they appear in our communities?"

He's got you. Those are questions you, America, have been asking. When the narrator poses them with the same tone of concern you've expressed, you're ready for some answers and you know he's about to provide them. If his answers seem reasonable, you'll probably agree with them.

So begins "Video Games: A Public Perspective," a 17-minute video tape that Atari introduced and disseminated to its distributors in late March of this year. The tape and several pages of backup material are part of CAP, the Community Awareness Program, which Atari says is "designed to combat the ever-increasing restrictive video game legislation cropping up across

'The tape grabs the viewers' attention with "real people," ordinary citizens expressing their fears about video games, and others—non-industry people—voicing accolades for video.'

the nation." Atari spokesperson Margaret Lasecke adds that CAP is only "the first in a series of (PR) tools we'll provide Atari distributors."

Is it an effective tool? If so, will it be used by operators and distributors? The signs are not good for the latter, so let's take the first question.

The tape sparkles with professional quality. Within 17 minutes, a time length that fits neatly into presentations to Rotary Clubs, city councils, and PTA's, "Video Games: A Public Perspective" presents the positive side of video games in a network quality documentary format. Within the supportive materials, Atari also

provides step by step guidelines on how to introduce yourself and the tape to a public audience.

The tape grabs the viewers' attention with "real people," ordinary citizens expressing their fears about video games, and others—non-industry people—voicing accolades for video. A beat cop in Chicago tells why he testified against restrictive legislation. Gangs and gang wars had been a problem in his neighborhood until the appearance of an arcade. The games keep the kids off the street and out of trouble, he says. The owner of a pizza parlor in Westchester County tells the audience that the games provide him revenue for community involvement, such as sponsorship of four or five softball teams. A research professor from the University of Illinois at Champagne-Urbana comments on the transfer of game skills, which he feels will help young and old adjust to the computer age we're now entering. A Long Island school psychologist feels that the games can be a tool that enhances communication between parents and their children, and he's written a guide to show parents how. And the list goes on as the tape progresses.

Yes, the negative fears of some parents are expressed and discussed, and yes, Don Osborne, Atari vice president, is seen at several points, offering calm, reasoned arguments in rebuttal. But most often the "real people" steal the show. While playing the games and talking positively about them, they are the industry's best ammunition. And they are far more effective than any impassioned speech, no matter how well researched and delivered, could be.

In short, the CAP tape can be an extremely effective public relations tool—if it's used.

"They (operators) haven't got time to get involved in any public relations," said Morris Piha, of Greater Southern in Atlanta, when I called to ask him about CAP. His comment looks coldly negative in print, much more negative than the tone in which it was voiced. Piha says that he has shown the tape to several operators,

when they have time, and he intends to continue, but only one so far has asked to make use of it. "Most don't have the facilities to use it," he said, adding, "They (Atari) are gonna have to get us some more tapes."

But Bill Curley, general manager of Phillip Moss & Co., Des Moines, Iowa, is making copies of the Atari tape for operators in his area who request it. So is Rubin Franco of Montgomery, Alabama. All, however, echo Paul Pettigrew, Rowe International in Phoenix, who admits, "We really haven't made use of it like we should." Pettigrew says he encourages operators to borrow the tape,—"I'll even loan them my tape player and screen"—but he adds, "we haven't had any calls lately."

So Piha's suggestion that Atari provide additional copies of the tape seems a bit much. Having been in the television news business, I can assure you that in producing the original tape Atari has already spent a bundle. Sending a professional video crew with a writer, producer, narrator, and support personnel to various locations around the country, finding people, pro and con, who were willing to appear on camera—that, and more, was not a penny ante undertaking. Making additional copies is a nominal expense by comparison, an expense that should be incurred by the distributors and operators.

On the other hand, Atari's expectations of distributors may be a bit high. In CAP's supporting materials, Atari suggests that each distributor appoint, within his own organization, a public relations coordinator who should:

1. Coordinate all requests from operators and community members regarding the usage of the community awareness video tape.
2. Maintain a schedule for the video tape to ensure frequent and effective usage.
3. Monitor the effect of the Community Awareness materials by insisting that the feedback sheet be completed and returned to Atari.
4. Respond to all media calls.

Depending on the size of the state and the number of legislative problems that occur, the tasks outlined by Atari could take up a lot of time, ten to thirty hours a week is my guess. I doubt that many distributors have that much time to devote to the cause, as worthwhile and necessary as it is. But isn't it time for someone to make time for positive PR?

Some are. Don Hankinson, president of the Georgia Amusement & Music Operators Association, and Les Schneider, the association's legal counsel, have successfully beaten back or softened several restrictive legislative efforts that arose in their state during the past two years. But they, and others like them in other states,

can't carry the ball forever.

Operators have been complaining for some time that they need help. Well now, with Atari's CAP, with the Community Relations Manual being produced by ADMA, AMOA, and the AVMDA, and with the work of aggressive state associations like the GAMOA, a team effort appears to be building and the tools are now available. So what say you, operators?

To be fair, I know that many of you have been and still are involved in your communities. Keep up the good work and share your successes with me. Call me, evenings, at 404/451-9548. I'll pass along your experiences to other operators, including the "how to" in this column. I'll

be discussing some nitty gritty practical PR matters like how and when to write a press release, and who to send it to. What facts should you have at your fingertips when answering calls from the media? What are some of the pitfalls to avoid when running a Game-A-Thon for a local charity? These and other matters I'll throw out for your perusal, but I need your help, and please don't assume that I've already heard about this or that promotion or idea. Call anyway.

In the next edition of this column, I'll be discussing, step by step, how to run a charity Game-A-Thon. Thanks to Mike Myahl, proprietor of Anniston, Alabama's "Magic Mountain," who believes in sharing.

VIDEO GAMES

A PUBLIC PERSPECTIVE



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COIN VIDEO GAMES: THE POSITIVE VIEW

Atari is a consumer-oriented high technology company with headquarters in Sunnyvale, California. Atari's products include coin video games, home video games and home computer systems.

In recent months, considerable public and media attention has been focused on coin video games. A number of local governments have considered ordinances restricting placement and use of these games.

Atari is concerned.

...as a manufacturer, we're going to communities. We're working with different agencies, and we're sitting down with people across a table and rolling up our sleeves and saying, 'what are the alternatives?'

—Donald B. Osborne
Vice President
Coin Video Games Division
Atari Incorporated

As a manufacturer of computer products and as a socially responsible corporation, Atari is particularly concerned about young people. Individually, we at Atari have children of our own. Our products are used by people of all ages in homes, classrooms and offices as well as public places. We expect to play an increasingly important role in the lives of millions of people, offering new ideas and products for use in education, household management, and business as well as recreation.

Atari has looked carefully at the apprehensions that have been expressed and objections that have been raised as video games have risen in popularity. Atari representatives have interviewed parents, young people, public officials, teachers, researchers and people involved in the video game industry.

When public passions are aroused, the positive side of an issue is sometimes lost from view. The video game controversy appears to be such a case. We want elected officials and the public at large to see that video games are basically a positive phenomenon, and that the video games industry is a responsive, responsible participant in our communities.

This paper outlines a positive view of video games. It is based on our own analysis as well as the observations of people with whom we have spoken. We hope that it will prove useful to public officials who are considering the coin video game issue, and to other interested individuals.

BACKGROUND

Historically, people have had a tendency to react against new technologies and new forms of entertainment. Opposition to video games is reminiscent of opposition to the automobile, to television, to rock-and-roll and to pocket billiards.

...I'm reminded of the Music Man and Robert Preston saying 'we have trouble here in River City.'

—Charles DiGiacomo, Supervisor
Cortlandt, New York

In actual fact, there have not been many real problems associated with coin video games. Even in communities where the issue has been hotly debated, we cannot find evidence that fears are justified in fact.

...People are groping for what seem to be logical reasons to support the position of 'no.'

—Dr. Jerry Schulster
Professor of Psychology
University of Connecticut
Stamford, Connecticut

...those occurrences (primarily noise) have been relatively infrequent, and I think you'd have to say that they have not been any worse, certainly no more frequent, than you'd expect at the ice cream parlor.

—David R. Rubin, Trustee
Village of Glenco, Illinois

The strongest criticisms of video games often seem to come from people who are not fully aware of what they are or what their benefits might be. It appears that the "issue" is largely a matter of education.

...I think they (the critics) really don't understand what the phenomenon of video games is all about. They didn't grow up in the computer age.

—George McAuliffe
Arcade Manager
Port Chester, New York

WHAT ARE VIDEO GAMES?

Video games are based on computer technology. Each game unit contains a microprocessor or "computer on a chip," and a video display. The game is actually a program or set of instructions that creates the graphics, sound, action and patterns of play. In ruling on a copyright issue, a federal judge recently compared video games to movies in which the player is a participant.

...this computer technology has been developed in conjunction with the video screen that really makes video games so special and so different.

—Don Osborne
Vice President
Coin Operated Games Division
Atari Incorporated

Success in video games depends on skill. The appeal of the games seems to be based on the fact that they challenge the player to learn certain skills, and then offer progressively tougher challenges as the player achieves higher scores. In other words, the reward is simply the opportunity to develop higher and higher levels of expertise.

...there are a number of things which kids have to bring into these game situations to be successful ...quick hand-eye coordination
...increased concentration ...strategies and planning.

—Dr. Jerry Schulster
Professor of Psychology
University of Connecticut
Stamford, Connecticut

...it's a skill only they can develop. They want to develop that skill even further.

—Sergeant Gregory Sweeney
Chicago Police Department

There is no evidence that video games are "addictive" in any physiological or even psychological sense. Rather, they are compelling. They require a high level of concentration. Some people work hard to "beat" the game.

...I've worked with people who wash their hands 97 times a day or open and close doors 97 times a day. The water in the sink isn't doing it to them. The doors aren't doing it to them.

—Peter Favaro
Clinical Psychologist
Long Island, New York

Video games are played by people of all ages. They seem to enjoy comparing their experience and sharing their strategies. In this sense, video games are a more active, social kind of experience than watching television or reading books.

...If you go to an arcade, you'll find a lot of people clustered around one game. Invariably people come with friends, and they play the games together.

—Dr. Jerry Schulster
Professor of Psychology
University of Connecticut
Stamford, Connecticut

Competition and conflict in video games are symbolic, much like the aggression in games like chess and football. Many people feel that video games are a healthy outlet for aggressive feelings.

...there is no evidence of kids being goaded to violence on the basis of video games. There have been no studies done, to my knowledge. If you want to see pure aggression, I would say go to a hockey game, not to an arcade.

—Dr. Jerry Schulster
Professor of Psychology
University of Connecticut
Stamford, Connecticut

WHO MAKES VIDEO GAMES, AND WHO OWNS THEM?

The video game industry is highly decentralized. Most of the participants are entrepreneurs and the owners of small businesses.

Basically, the video game industry breaks down into four groups: manufacturers, distributors, operators and retailers who own or lease the games. Operators often own the game machines. They take responsibility for placing them in favorable locations, for maintaining them and replacing them when players begin to lose interest. The great majority of video games are located in small retail stores or other places which can accommodate only one to three machines. The proprietors of these small businesses share the revenues with the operator.

...you have about 14 manufacturers, a few big ones and quite a few small ones. You have less than 100 distributors. Today I would say that you have about 15,000 operators in the country.

—Joseph Robbins, President
Amusement Device Manufacturers
Association

...there are literally hundreds, or maybe thousands, of small businesses that would disappear if it weren't for the income from those few machines they have.

—Joseph Robbins, President
Amusement Device Manufacturers
Association

THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF VIDEO GAMES

We believe that video games offer many potential benefits to individuals, families and communities. On one level, video games are a simple, relatively inexpensive form of recreation. They are often one of the few activities available to young people, both in big cities and suburban communities.

...I guess you would say the 24th District is pro-video machines because we have found that they are an asset to the youth in the community. It gives them some place to go to get out of the streets.

—Sergeant Gregory Sweeney
Chicago Police Department

...games are really the only things that we have around here, and if they take that away, there is just going to be nothing else for us to do except hang out.

—Bill Horan (14)
Montrose, New York

Success at video games helps some young people build confidence and self-esteem. And success at video games does not depend on size or athletic prowess.

...you can have a 13-year-old who's four feet tall and weighs 65 pounds, and he can take on the football captain and beat him.

—Sergeant Gregory Sweeney
Chicago Police Department

Interest in video games can lead to an interest in computer technology, and vice versa. In the near future, computers are going to play an even more important role in our economy and in our individual lives.

...computer games are the first playthings of an information revolution, games in which the player matches wits with an intelligent machine.

—Paul Trachtman, Editor
Smithsonian Magazine
September, 1981

...future generations are going to have to be dealing with computers. I think the more they get involved with these games, with those video screens, the more comfortable they are going to feel with these things.

—David R. Rubin
Trustee (and Father)
Village of Glenco, Illinois

...when I was in high school, they had a very old first-generation tube machine computer there. The most complicated thing it did was play tic-tac-toe. So I thought, 'this is great, I can tell it to do

what I want and it does it for me.' And it was just that much of a challenge.

—Computer Programmer Owen Rubin
Sunnyvale, California

Researchers are using video games to study complex learning processes. And they are beginning to suspect that computer games may help people learn information processing skills that are increasingly important in today's high-technology industries.

...games provide a laboratory setting where we can develop tremendous expertise. We can study the development of expertise and how expertise is maintained.

—Dr. Emanuel Donchin, Chairman
Psychology Department
University of Illinois
Champagne-Urbana, Illinois

...nowadays, the pilot, the nuclear plant controller, the driver of a car is an information manager. The fancier the equipment, the more information you have to manage. So the cognitive skills are now much more important.

—Dr. Emanuel Donchin, Chairman
Psychology Department
University of Illinois
Champagne-Urbana, Illinois

A leading optometrist has found that video games can help people develop visual skills and concentration.

...I have recently started training some of the top athletes in the country using video cassette games. Concentration is the most important thing as far as sports are concerned. Training with these games has improved their concentration tremendously.

—Dr. Leon Revien, Optometrist
Long Island, New York

...yes, I think I get some skill out of it. I can now use my hands and look at the paper and up at other things at the same time.

—Amy Horan (8)
Montrose, New York

On another level, video game parlors often provide important services to their communities.

...I have many, many parents come in here and they ask me to watch the kids because they have to go do the laundry or they have to go shopping. They give the kids two, three dollars and they let them play. If the kids don't have any more money, we give them extra games until the mother comes back.

—Dennis Georges, Arcade Owner
Chicago, Illinois

A shared interest in video games can help bring parents and their children together.

...I've developed a manual which teaches parents how to find out what the children are thinking, to find out what's going on in their fantasies. The games can be used, if used correctly, to facilitate communication between parents and children.

—Peter Favaro
Clinical Psychologist
Long Island, New York

IN ANY COMMUNITY WHERE VIDEO GAMES BECOME AN ISSUE,
COOPERATION IS THE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION

Politically, the best course for local leaders is to listen carefully to the concerns of the public and the game owners, and to consider all aspects of the matter.

...there is a certain amount of airing of the whole issue that has got to be done. I think that tends to defuse some of the emotions that probably will arise when the first game shop operator decides he wants to come into the community.

—David R. Rubin, Trustee
Glenco, Illinois

From the viewpoint of the community, good management of establishments where video games are located is the key to success. Community awareness and strict control of behavior by managers invariably results in a safe, positive atmosphere.

...he runs it strict, as if every one of the kids were part of his own family. Two months ago, we gave him a plaque and a certificate recognizing what he has done for the police in the 24th District and the City of Chicago.

—Sergeant Gregory Sweeney
Chicago Police Department

...the selection of a manager is very important to us. The selection process is based on the person's ability to handle people. We want someone who is mature and who can run this business as a business should be run.

—Steve Goot, Arcade Owner
Atlanta, Georgia

...we really don't want children in here during school hours. You'll notice on the rules and regulations that we do not allow anyone under 18 in here while school is in session. This is voluntary.

—Steve Goot, Arcade Owner
Atlanta, Georgia

When people are concerned about what is going on in a video game arcade, their fears are put to rest when parents and public officials see for themselves that nothing bad is happening.

...parents are constantly in and out of these establishments, and we have our building inspector and various other people who monitor the type of activities that take place there. We haven't had any problems. That (drugs) was one of the concerns of the parents in our community, and we quickly put that concern to rest.

—Charles DiGiacomo, Supervisor
Cortlandt, New York

On the other hand, parents ultimately must take responsibility for knowing where their children are and what they are doing.

...parents need to assume more responsibility for their children and for the way they spend their time.

—Rev. Dr. J. Bruce Coleman
First Presbyterian Church
Sunnyvale, California

...it really comes down to how well the parents discipline the children, and how the children use their time.

—David R. Rubin, Trustee
Village of Glenco, Illinois

Young people must learn to manage their own money and time. They gain important insights by making their own choices. Video games are just one of many alternatives that they must work into their budgets.

...I think the kids should be allowed to go out at lunchtime and go to these places. You have to teach them responsibility at some point, and they know when they have to be back for their next class.

—Mrs. Anne Horan
Mother and Teacher
Montrose, New York

...I think I started to realize that you can still have fun playing these games if you restrict yourself moneywise. You like to save your money so you can buy some other things, too.

—Bill Horan, (14)
Montrose, New York

In any case, young people do not generally spend a major share of their money on video games. According to the Rand Youth Poll, a nationwide study of teenage economic power completed in September, 1981, young people as a group put less than 4% of their disposable income into video games. Boys between the ages of 13 and 15, for example, spend about \$1.50 on food and snacks for every quarter they drop into a game machine. Between the ages of 16 and 19, they spend five dollars on movies, dating and entertainment for every video game dollar. By the time they reach the 16 to 19 age category, girls spend more than a third of their money on clothing, reserving less than 1% of their cash for video games.

ATARI IS CONTINUING TO WORK CLOSELY WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Atari is always looking for imaginative ways to bring young people into contact with exciting new technologies. Through the Atari Institute, Atari helps communities and researchers explore new computer applications.

In addition, Atari is working directly with communities to help solve pressing problems.

In San Jose, California, for example, Atari is getting involved in youth activity programs and civic fund-raising projects.

...about two years ago, Atari helped us set up a game room at our Downtown Festival on the 4th of July. In the past few months, we have been negotiating with Atari to set up a pilot project putting game rooms in some of our community centers.

—Neil Christie
Youth Services Division
Parks and Recreation Department
San Jose, California

...income from these games can go to support other types of positive programs that young people will participate in and that the community wants to see.

—Neil Christie
Youth Services Division
Parks and Recreation Department
San Jose, California