GAME PURPOSE

By playing the role of both a startup social media platform policy trust and saftey team and a content moderator, participants can begin to experience some of the challenges associated with moderating user generated online content in a way that balances values such as free expression and community safety.

Game works best with **3** players, but other sized groups can still play

THE STORY

Congratulations, your brand new social media startup, Contentr has just received funding from investors! You've been following the news and are determined to avoid the same mistakes as your predecessors, so the first place you want to start is to develop your content moderation policy. There are three rounds to the game: first you'll work as a team to develop the policy that will help you shape the kind of platform you want to grow. You'll then switch roles from policy developer to content moderator, where you'll use your policy to make moderation decisions, based on real life examples. Finally, you'll see how your decisions play out, calculating your final score based on real life examples of moderation decisions, and how those decisions affect two areas: free expression and community safety.

You will begin with 500 free expression points and 500 community safety points. Free expression points are important because they provide space for your users to express themselves and community safety points are important because they ensure your users are free from potential off-platform harms. The more you are able to balance your points, the more "mass appeal" your game will have, resulting in more ad revenue.

CONTENT WARNING

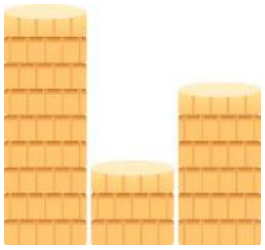
This game involves discussing descriptions of (but not viewing) sexually explicit content, harassment, hate speech, self-harm, illegal activity, misinformation, and violent content. The purpose of the game is to provide deeper understanding of platform governance which is inherently challenging, frustrating, and sometimes upsetting, and these are emotions you may feel as you play the game. You should take breaks and feel free to leave the game if needed.

Additionally, we encourage the use of John Stavropoulos' X-card strategy (link here: http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg). If a card is particularly uncomfortable to engage with, simply press this button:

X

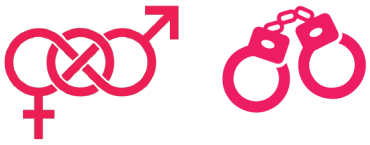
BEGIN: SETUP

The game is divided into three cycles, each focuses on different areas of controversial content. At the start of each cycle, you will receive an investment which will allow the Contentr Trust & Safety team to make decisions related to growth. Throughout the game you will experience changes to both free expression and community safety points and your budget.



CYCLES

You will notice, the cycles are grouped by category of controversial content and the cycle is displayed on the card:



Cycle 1:
Sexually Explicit Content & Illegal Activity

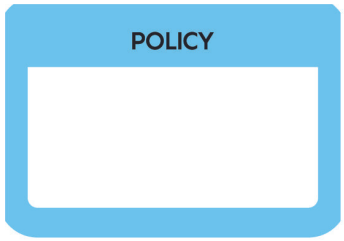
Cycle 2:
Self Harm & Graphic Content

Cycle 3:
Harassment, Hate Speech & Quality Contributions

Depending on time you may choose to only play one cycle. Each cycle lasts approx. 60 minutes. For the deepest experience, play the cycles in order, but playing a single cycle is also fun.

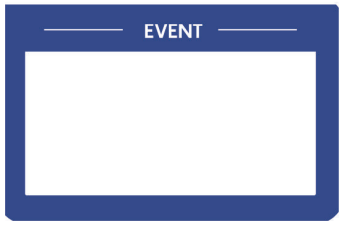
ROUNDS

Each cycle has rounds which are signaled by the border of the cards.



Round 1: Policy
Playing the role of the Trust and Safety team, write Contentr's community guidelines/platform policies

Round 2: Content
Playing the role of the Content Moderator, enact the Contentr's policies (one nuance card per cycle)



Round 3: Event
Events based on real life examples of pushback social media companies have forced over the years. Some consequences are based on decisions made in rounds 1 and 2, and other events happen regardless of the platform's efforts

PLAY YOUR FIRST CYCLE

You may be wondering, "wait, what is Contentr?"

Contentr is a start up social media company attempting to take market share from the today's leading platforms. The site allows users to connect with friends, community members and high profile figures. It includes a range of user generated content: text, photos, videos, articles. Lastly, it includes ads and a news feed.

The company's values will be shaped as you form policies.

ROUND 1: SET POLICIES

In this round, you will decide what kind of content your company wants to allow, and what it wants to prohibit.

To start, Find the description of the Trust and Safety role and review the card.

SORT

You'll all work together to decide which policies to enact, but in the interest of time, since there are three of you, when you disagree, majority rules.

Rather than starting from scratch, you'll select from a set of existing policies. (It is very common for new platforms to look at the policies of competitor social media platforms for inspiration.) You'll do this by sorting the light blue policy cards into one of two categories: Allowed or Banned.

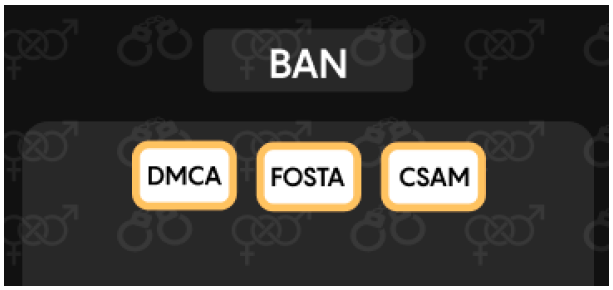
SECTION 230 & PRE CYCLE

To guide you, you have your own values as a company, but you also need to follow existing legislation. First is Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which provides your team with a “shield” and a “sword.” The shield means that your platform cannot be held liable for content users post with a few exceptions (pre-banned cards, discussed below). The sword means your platform can “moderate” content on the platform as long as you do not “publish” or “edit.”

But there are some exceptions, represented with pre-banned cards. As a small company you will do your best to avoid this content, as a large legal battle may bankrupt you.

- The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) states intermediaries such as your platform have “indirect liability” if they do not make efforts to take down copyrighted material.
- The Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA), was passed in 2018 and outlaws content that facilitates traffickers in advertising the sale of unlawful sex acts with sex trafficking victims.
- Federal law requires that you take down and report content representing child sexual exploitation as soon as reasonably possible. Represented as a reference to Title 18 crime laws (TX VII)

Other than these three types of banned content, you have the shield and the sword - moderation decisions are up to you.

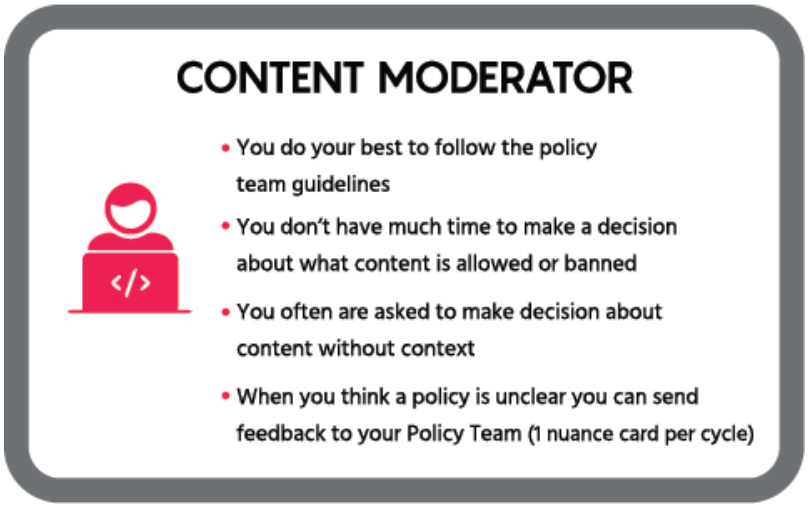


ROUND 2: MODERATING CONTENT

Excellent work! You now have a policy that you'll use to make decisions about the kind of content that's allowed on your platform. In this round you'll switch roles, from policy developer to content moderator.

Find the description of the Content Moderator role and review the card.

Once you understand the role, sort the grey cards into allow or banned based on the policy cards sorted in round 1.



NUANCE CARDS

Finally, as in real life, a content moderator can suggest policy changes to your company's trust and safety team based on their personal experiences. At the end of the cycle, you will be able to add nuance to one existing policy. For example, if a gray card is placed in the "allow" or "banned" pile based on existing policies and you want to switch it, you can edit a policy to make the switch.

ROUND 3: CONSEQUENCES

You've made it to round 3! All the hard work is done and now you get to see the outcomes of your decisions. You started with 500 free expression (FE) points, and 500 community safety (CS) points.

In this round you'll read the event cards (Dark Blue Border). The blue cards are based on examples of pushback social media companies have faced over the years. Some consequences are based on decisions made in rounds 1 and 2, and other events happen regardless of the platform's efforts.

You will notice different types of event cards, including "Society" (events that occurred in the society at large) and "algorithm" (automated decision-making trained rightly or wrongly based on decisions made during rounds 1 and 2).

Events are based on real world push back that leading social media platforms have received. To read the reference press the "more"

OPTIONS TO COMPLETE THE GAME & REFLECTION

Option: play another cycle.

If you choose to play another cycle: Stack the cards currently in your “Ban” column and place next to the pink “Ban” card. Stack the cards currently in your “Allow” column and place them next to the pink “Allow” card.

After Cycle 3...

Option: The game is complete.

Take a look at your final score (both the FE/CS points and revenue). Do you feel like you “won”? why? why not?

Takeaways from the game:

- How did your views of social media change after playing the game?
- Which decisions were easy, why?
- Which decisions were challenging, why?

BACKGROUND

Social media content moderation practices vary from company to company, are inherently opaque and span well beyond simply allowing or banning content. This game is meant to give a taste of the challenges posed by hosting a site for user generated content but should in no way be interpreted as a comprehensive overview of trust and safety practices.

The categories of content and roles were informed by:

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