



Connections UK 2021

Bringing on the Next Generation





These sessions were co-facilitated by the Fast Stream Wargaming Network and the Connections team. The following slides are a summary of the conversations held, with the below being the FS Wargaming Networks own reflections.

There are many reasons to support an inflow of new talent into the wargaming community. Greater buy in from policy makers, fresh ideas and new game designs are a few of the many benefits. While there are many actions we can take (as set out in this slide pack) – the main one is to ask **“is there a plan?”** Luckily, we are nothing if not a community of planners.

Where will new members of this community come from? What will they be exposed to when they show interest? How will we move them from observers to participants, then from participants to leaders?

These are all practical challenges – and ones I think we can all work together to solve.



These slides are the consolidated outputs from ‘Bringing on the Next Generation’ at Connections UK 2021

The plenary and breakout groups examined the question, ‘How can we best bring on the next generation of wargaming professionals?’

The intent was to prompt the discussion, gather and consolidate suggestions from the Connections community.

The following bullet points are actionable suggestions that it is hoped will help address the issue.



‘How can we best bring on the next generation of wargaming professionals?’

Empower the community

- **Lead by example.** Those in executive and decision-making positions should appoint newcomers to wargaming practitioner roles, mentor and champion the next generation.
- **Encourage new designers.** Give newcomers the opportunity to design games they can use. This is an iterative, time-consuming and often disheartening process, which requires ongoing opportunities to collaborate and review.
- **Reduce gatekeeping.** Existing practitioners must remove barriers to entry/the price of admission. Rather, they should keep the gates open to newcomers.
- **Ensure diversity.** This should be across genders, generations, ethnicity and culture – as well as the civilian and military divide. Specifically, invite girls to wargame.
- **Practice peer support and mentoring.** Remember the former is generally more sustainable, so identify specific opportunities for the latter, e.g. conferences.
- **Be honest.** Tell people up front that they will probably not be doing wargaming as their full time job, but rather as part of their job.
- **Explain language.** Not everyone will know what to do with an AAR from a control involving an SME discussing an SSGN.



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Identify opportunities

- **Consider what wargames do.** It’s not just a name, it’s the process and the intended outcome – digital, in-person, hybrid, and what is the point of this game?
- **Be humble, ask questions and listen.** There are lots of individuals and organisations using similar activities, often with different names. Telling them they are actually wargaming or assuming why they aren’t already involved is arrogant and off-putting. Remember that most teachers are better at teaching than wargamers.
- **Try to demystify wargaming.** Too much is hidden away by corporations or by classification. New wargamers need the opportunity to see, understand, and experience professional games.
- **Adopt lateral growth.** Bottom up is not the only way to acquire new wargamers: teaching existing professionals in other fields by getting them involved in wargames also creates wargamers
- **Reach out to other places.** The Emergency Planning Society, Business Continuity Institute, Uniformed youth organisations – for fun, development, and mutual benefit.
- **Show their worth/relevance.** Wargames can be useful for planning housing allocation, informing people about the economy, or teaching current events - as well as for professionals.



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Engage audiences

- **Tailor the name/activity to suit the audience.** ‘Wargaming’ may have negative connotations or mislead people as to a activity’s content. ‘Conflict simulation’ or ‘crisis simulation’ may be useful alternatives.
- **Make it young person friendly.** Capture your audience and normalise the process. Ask them how this might be done.
- **Ensure diversity.** This should be across genders, generations, ethnicity and culture – as well as the civilian and military divide.
- **Ensure a safe-to-fail gaming environment.** Ensure wargames are not intimidating, and safe spaces for creative thought that might involve things not working – we can learn from these mistakes.
- **Facilitate equality.** Facilitators must make sure everyone is heard during games, including new or shy participants.
- **Get wargaming visible.** It doesn’t matter if it’s *Warhammer* or *Watch the Skies* – popularise it, support university wargaming clubs, make videos about it, get celebrity endorsements and talk about it in schools! (But note Warhammer and other activities associated with the target audience tend to represent a participant base at odds with many previous bullet points – it does matter).



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Sustain the process

- **Maintain curated online resources.** Keep available (and updated) all the information, lectures, conferences, and networking that has moved online during the pandemic.
- **Institutionalise wargaming.** Build broader buy-in to wargaming, particularly in educational establishments, to halt the loss of experience and knowledge.
- **Encourage the development of professional wargaming.** Organisations like Connections and the Georgetown University Wargaming Society (GUWS) should be active & engaging.
- **Provide a golden thread of ongoing wargaming activities.** Existing networks such as Connections and GUWS should provide regular ongoing activities, focused development and mentoring opportunities.
- **Establish new wargaming networks.** Establish new wargaming networks. These need to be embedded into places that wargame outside of the traditional organisations, to prevent institutional memory loss and promote self-development. Seek out mutually beneficial collaborations.
- **Consider accreditation and a development pathway.** Working with Higher Education institutions and Cross-Government agencies should allow for training below degree level.