

# IGG goes global with Google

With breakthrough titles such as *Lords Mobile* and *Castle Clash* and \$800 million in revenue in 2018, 700 million registered players, and over 24 million MAUs in over 200 countries, IGG is a leader in global mobile gaming.

## Challenge

Develop a gaming development, distribution, and monetization platform on a global scale.

## Approach

Used Google Play, Ads, AdMob, Analytics, Trends, Google Cloud, and YouTube to develop an integrated, fast, stable, data-driven infrastructure to achieve new levels of efficiency, performance, and growth.

In the last decade, the gaming industry has undergone a huge transformation. According to NewZoo's 2019 Gaming Industry Report<sup>1</sup>, with \$68.5 billion in revenue, mobile gaming is the largest segment, accounting for 45% of the global games market. Founded in 2006 by a group of passionate gamers who wanted to share games made in China with the world, IGG — short for I Got Games — has experienced this transformation first hand. Now headquartered in Singapore, with offices in 15 countries, they've created over 50 original games for mobile, web, and PC, and serve 700 million registered players and over 24 million MAUs (monthly active users) in countries around the world. With its breakthrough titles such as *Lords Mobile* and *Castle Clash*, IGG has grown to become a leader in the global mobile gaming industry, with \$749 million in revenue in 2018.

IGG's philosophy of "innovators at work, gamers at heart" has helped them navigate the shifts of the industry. "Along the way we had a little luck and put in a lot of effort," says Kevin Xu, the COO of IGG. "We knew we wanted to develop an approach that focused on global game development and marketing, with fun, first-class gaming experiences and localization that caters to a global audience. We shifted from consoles to social games, but were a bit late. Then we saw the mobile gaming opportunity and shifted our focus to take advantage of it. With the rise of the mobile-first generation, this strategy has served us really well."

"To support our growth, we started using Google Play, and now use Ads, AdMob, Analytics, Cloud, and YouTube," Kevin explains. "We see huge benefits in working with multiple Google products and we've gotten great support over the years — it feels like we work with one integrated team. From development and store management to acquisition, getting feedback directly from players, and iterating our games, Google is our closest partner."



IGG, Inc.  
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[igg.com](http://igg.com)

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30%

of revenue from organic advertising

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5X

revenue increase from AdMob video ad integration

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58%

of revenue comes from Android

<sup>1</sup> <https://newzoo.com/solutions/standard/market-forecasts/global-games-market-report/>

All of their products work so well together, and combined with the support from the teams, we've seen huge value that's helped us achieve new levels of efficiency, performance, and growth."

## Using data to create great games

To create great games on a global scale, Kevin attributes his team's understanding and use of insights in all parts of their decision-making as a key part of IGG's success. "Prior to working with Google, we weren't data-driven," he says. "Now it's part of everything we do. We love Google Cloud, just love it. We find the cost low relative to the value and support we get. It's not only fast and super stable, but it has the global infrastructure we need and connects easily to other Google platforms. Combined, we use these products to improve our game design.

The IGG team uses combined data from Google Play, AdMob, Data Studio, and Google Analytics to uncover insights and new opportunities. They use Google Play Console to bring their games to life, such as release management, store listing, A/B testing, and user feedback. They use these throughout the development cycle, from testing to launch to updates, and combine them with tools like Data Studio. "Google Data Studio presents our game data to us visually, allowing us to easily identify a game's areas of possible optimization." They also combine these with insights from Google Trends to help evaluate industry, player, and artistic trends, and identify what games to work on for the next 5-10 years.

"The users that come from Google Play have the best of the best retention rates," Kevin says. And with Google Play, IGG's payment structure has become radically simplified. "Payment gateways are hugely important. Before, we had to set up 30 different types of payments in 30 different countries. With Google, we're able to streamline everything on a global scale, and make it much easier for our users to buy what they want when they want it."

## Connecting with the global community

A big part of IGG's performance has come from a mindset of always finding the best ways to connect with passionate gamers around the world. "With the help of Google, we can market our games globally," says Kevin. "The Google Play store has been the largest source of users and exposure of IGG's products."

IGG has been using Google Ads for more than 13 years as part of their acquisition strategy. "Our success is really based on user acquisition and Ads has been a huge driver of this.

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## Partnering with Google Play

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With Ads we can upload hundreds of creative variations automatically and easily tailor and optimize them to each market,” he says. “Combined with Google Analytics, we can determine how to best connect with users in each market through advertising and make sure we’re spending our budget wisely. We also use Ads to breathe new life into older games, bringing on new users as we roll out updates. And now we’re also able to attract more potential high-value users with Google Play gift cards.”

For both promotion and retention, Kevin’s team primarily turns to YouTube. “It’s become our most important media platform for promo and retention. We publish all our in-game videos there. Player representatives, known as IGG ambassadors, upload videos to our channels and use them to build play-to-player networking channels to gain fame. These videos are hugely popular with players — they get hundreds of thousands of views — so it builds community for both our casual and hard-core players.

We also work with key YouTube influencers to market our games and YouTube has had a huge impact during our eSport Lords Tournament Asia in 2018. We uploaded videos and highlights on our official YouTube channel, promoting the Lords Mobile brand and increasing player retention rates.”

The IGG team nurtures their player community on Google Play and YouTube. They constantly evaluate feedback and offer early access and inside views to games, demonstrating to their global community that they’re listening and learning, and in turn striving to create even better gaming experiences. “We have been able to continually improve on our games and continually raise user retention rates.”

## The right path to monetization

Over time, IGG has tried several solutions for driving revenue from their games, but found the combination of Google AdMob and Google Play to be the best combination.

“We’ve found with mobile games that we can monetize much better with Google Play. And with Google AdMob, we can bring relevant advertising experiences on a global scale, which delivers a much better user experience. We’ve been using AdMob for a year to monetize the non-paying users in our games. It’s increased both our daily active users and ROI — 58% of our revenue is from Android users in the first half of 2019. We get great support from the Google AdMob team and have found that only AdMob can offer the global inventory of ads we need for our games.”

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To make sure users get the best experience with ads within a game, the IGG team tests multiple formats with AdMob. “We’ve found incentive video ads to be especially effective,” says Kevin. “For example, after we implemented AdMob into Casino Deluxe, the game’s revenue increased five times, and we attribute 80% of the increase to AdMob.”

## Investing in the future of gaming

The rise of mobile gamers has shifted how IGG thinks about game development. “People from all backgrounds are going to jump onto the mega-entertainment platform of mobile gaming, and we want to be there for them. We now have developers in 12 markets, and we’re investing in new ways to develop games,” Kevin says, “especially in R&D and operations, such as opening up a training center for game designers in Italy.”

With so much experience under their belts, the IGG team knows the one constant in the gaming industry is change. They’ve put together the right combination of technology, operations, and development methodologies to both adapt and consistently bring great games to market on a global scale. “We’re always up for learning something new — if we didn’t we wouldn’t be where we are — and we’ve learned a lot from Google’s platforms. If there’s a beta test for a new product, we always open to trying it out.”

“Making great global games is our secret sauce,” Kevin continues. “It’s been our focus from the start, and Google understands this. Google’s ‘one stop’ of integrated products, solutions, and services — along with the great support they’ve provided — make it so much easier for gaming companies like us. They’re with us at every stage, from development to monetization, and have helped us bring our vision to life. We’re looking forward to working very closely with them in the years to come.”



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