

## Examining the secrets to games series successes

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*Slot studios are increasingly finding success in series of games that follow one character or plot line over a number of igaming titles. Here, CasinoBeats talks to a number of them to explore this rising trend, and how recognisable themes and characters can establish a long-term fanbase.*

*We put the questions to **Andrzej Hyla**, head of sales at Wazdan, **Boro Brumen**, Greentube games design and portfolio manager, and **Carl Ejlertsson**, business development director at Red Tiger.*

**CB: When setting out an original title with a certain theme or lead character, are they designed to have sequels or does it depend on the game's success?**

**AH:** Whether it's a standalone title or a game in a series, we strive to make the best game possible regardless of other factors. Of course, there's always a chance that a certain slot could see major success and we may then decide to roll it out further if there's scope for future evolution of the concept.



*Andrzej Hyla, head of sales at Wazdan.*

One of our first and most popular series, Magic Stars, was envisaged to evolve into a series, with a premise of adding more reels to each consecutive sequel. This resulted in the success of Magic Stars 3, 5, 6 and allowed us to keep close to the core feel of the brand, all while adding something fresh for players in each expanded version.

This commitment to building on each slot before has led to the latest in the series, Magic Stars 9, which not only offers the biggest number of reels yet, but also features free spins with infinite multiplier and the new stars spins bonus.

Our Power of Gods series has also followed a similar pattern of continual evolution. Mythical slots have always been a big draw to a large demographic of players, and we knew that the scope of the genre meant that we could be creative in developing future versions according to what players have resonated with before.

Greek mythology is a great foundation, and we used this theme in our legendary release: Power of Gods: The Pantheon, and most recently rejigged the setup to include the Egyptian deities in Power of Gods: Egypt, while there's more to come in the series in 2021.

**BB:** Whether or not we decide to develop a sequel, depends primarily on the success of the game. We do however keep the possibility of a sequel in mind during the game design cycle.

When setting out to create a new game, we first look at what is missing in our own portfolio as well as in the market as a whole and then try to fill those gaps. We already have quite a few successful series of our own, so it is not something we feel we are lacking, and creating sequels is not at the forefront of our decision-making workflow.

Instead, when we develop a title which has the potential to be its own series, which is usually because it has a certain unique mechanic, we discuss options and ideas for sequels, and keep them in mind for future planning.



*Boro Brumen, Greentube games design and portfolio manager.*

If we plan a sequel, even before the title is released, there are certain things we do, such as giving it a Series Title, which is displayed before the game title. A great example is our Diamond Link series.

If the first Diamond Link release had not been a success, we would not have created additional Diamond Link games. Fortunately, it was, and we now have a few Diamond Link titles with more to come.



*Carl Ejlertsson, business development director at Red Tiger.*

**CE:** There may on occasions have been games which had the original intention of being a series, but for the vast majority you have to wait and see what type of reception the original one gets.

It would be a risk and potentially a waste of resources laying out a number of games only for the first to flop. But they're all slightly different. For Pirates' Plenty we actually came up with a great feature set and there were too many for one game. We split it into different games as a result.

We had the pirate theme in mind at the same time, but we weren't necessarily taking our cue from it, or envisaging a series of games featuring the character. As it happens, the games that do well and become series tend to have a strong, identifiable character. But studios will usually wait to see how popular that character is before committing to a series around it.

**CB: As slot brands or series grow, do players look for similar gameplay to remain true to the original or for enhanced features and additions in every new title?**

**BB:** A series is usually defined by a theme and/or a mechanic. Themes can be interchangeable, but the mechanics are usually what makes the player stay or come back for more.

In my opinion, the core loop gameplay of any sequel should always be recognisable across the titles of the same series. However, with each sequel, we try to innovate and make it even better than the one before. Players will choose the enhanced versions if they like them or will stick to the original game if they preferred that. It is usually quite subjective.

**CE:** It's probably a mix of both. Generally speaking, players are looking for good game play experiences. There was something that attracted them to the original which you need to define and then recapture in any sequel. What you can't afford is a lacklustre sequel that is softer or somehow not as captivating as the first game.

It has to have the same base level engagement that got players excited in the first place. Once you've bottled that, you need to build upon it by adding variety or new elements. The obvious thing is to create potential around the original. You have to capitalise on what people know and the expectations they have. You can't afford to rip that up. But at the same time, you have to introduce a new twist.

**AH:** We like to stay open-minded when developing sequels as it's so important to be able to provide different variations to attract players with different demands. Saying that, if a brand is to grow, it must be recognisable in its core design to appeal to players of those games that went before it.

Each title in the Magic Stars series stays true to the wider retro-styled brand, while each also has its own individual appeal that set themselves apart from others in the set.

Power of Gods has a clear mythological appeal, but part of the games' identity is also to attract players who crave big bonuses and standalone special features. At the start of each of title's development we must factor this in just as much as design to remain true to the original and continue appealing to this type of players.

Ultimately, series are great to retain players and build up a following, but adaptability and range is also key to attract the widest audience possible. For this reason, we've introduced volatility levels which give players control and allow them to modify size and frequency of wins on the fly. It's features such as these that ensure branded, themed content remains fresh and interesting to the widest audience possible.