Session two: Airecon 12.03.2022

This was a short, informal session held during Airecon 2022 for anyone who was interested in discussing best practice for board game organisers and sharing their ideas/issues/questions. It was run by Adam from Herefordshire Boardgamers and Aaron from Preston Gamers Guild.

Present

Adam Best	Herefordshire Board Gamers
Elaine Best	Herefordshire Board Gamers
Aaron Leahy	Preston Gamer's Guild
Duncan	Billericay Gaming club
Jeric	Cheltenham Board Game Community
Dave	Gamer's Gaming Getaway
Andrew	York. Attends a games club in York but is not one of the organisers.
Andrew	Cumberland.

Introductions

Adam introduced the session and a bit about Herefordshire Board Gamers, then opened it up for introductions.

Aaron from Preston Gamers Guild. They have been running for around 5 years. They make very good use of social media in order to get games from publishers to be able to give away in 'comment to win' competitions. This relies on them having so many thousand followers. Before lockdown they used to get around 40 attendees but numbers have dropped a lot to around 10 per session. He has had to change venues 4 times since re-opening after lockdown and now has a great venue but has to charge for attendance due to venue hire whereas they used to meet for free in a pub.

Duncan from Billericay said their club has been running for around 7 years. They play at his office and have room for about 5 or 6 tables with around 20 to 30 people attending. He said there are 3 clubs in the area and used to knowledge share before Covid-19 but this has stopped now.

Jeric is from a gaming group in Cheltenham. He said they have been going since 2014. He said they started from a social group on Meetup where some people started bringing card games and then more and more board games. They get around 30 people to a club night and meet in pubs. They tend to get people showing up who are new to the area and looking to meet people. They don't have a games library as people bring their own games. They shut down during lockdown and didn't meet up online. They have also left Meetup and just use Facebook now. People donate towards hiring halls for ad hoc weekend sessions.

Andrew from York doesn't run a board game club but is trying to start a tournament for 'Friedlich' which isn't a particularly well-known game but is having issues with finding people to play.

Andrew from Cumberland attends a club and was after ideas for increasing attendance. Their venue charges them £3 to play.

Board Game community organisers knowledge share and round table (Herefordshire Board Gamers)

Dave from Gamer's Gaming Getaway. Attends a local club as well as running a small board gaming con.

Adam asked the group to share any topics they would like to discuss in this session and they were as follows:-

How to grow attendance numbers

Venue considerations i.e costs and insurance

Club structure such as Code of Conduct

Networking

How to define a board game club

What is a board Game Club?

A group which focus on events and playing games rather than selling a product.

Growing attendance and Advertising

Advertising within existing communities (getting 'vouched in' by another group).

Facebook/Instagram boosted posts- are these worth it? Duncan said he works in digital marketing and doesn't believe these are effective or worth the money. Adam said Herefordshire Board gamers has some grant money which can be used on adverting so is considering trying these for the first time. Aaron said they have really grown their social media following by running 'comment/share to win' competitions but some people only follow for these and then immediately unfollow.

Meetup is a good tool but works better in larger cities.

Permanent signage e.g in a library

Running events for children can help to bring the parents into gaming

Building a good culture

Dedicated games teachers. Welcoming for new attendees. Dedicating the first 45 minutes or so of the session to playing warm up games that people can join in with such as Codenames or So Clover. If you decide to run a newbie friendly games club then commit to it with greeters, a games library and playing the games the guests want it was said jokingly "expect to never be able to play a game you want to again at a public session! " Once you've committed to being inclusive consistency and effort is important.

Having to ban difficult members for things like transphobia, excessive drunkenness and disruptive behaviour.

Diversity. Using pronoun name badges to help people feel comfortable. Holding dedicated LGBTQ plus nights to try and show they everyone within the community is welcome to attend a games night.

Code of Conducts. Some people can be put off by these but they also show that the club cares about its members and offers some sort of protection against negative behaviour.

Venues

The benefits of having a free venue but this often means this has to be a pub which can be off-putting for some people. Having to charge can also be off-putting for some people as they may not be able to attend due to the cost.

Future:

There was an interest in meeting more regularly and sharing knowledge with the potential for dedicated sessions.