

Marisa Smailes

Helping great products find their people.

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SUMMARY

Strategic product manager with 18 years building products at the intersection of engagement, community, and growth that make players feel like they belong. Specializes in the full product lifecycle: from zero-to-one, concept through long-tail live operations. Believes the strongest products are built *with* communities, not just *for* them as a product's most durable competitive advantage. Deep expertise in free-to-play economy design where the best monetization systems are the ones players choose to engage with, not ones designed to extract. Proven track record building internal tools that let small teams punch far above their weight and keeping teams fueled with insights that get them excited to tackle the next problem space.

SKILLS

Product Strategy: Live ops; roadmap development; free-to-play economy design, monetization, and battle pass systems; LTV and price elasticity modeling; A/B testing; go-to-market; CRM (notification, push & email re-engagement strategy); community management

Research & Analytics: User research and personas; competitive analysis and market landscape mapping; KPI benchmarking; data taxonomy design; playtesting, interviews, and survey design

Tools & Platforms: Discord, Miro, Notion, Atlassian (JIRA, Confluence, Trello, Loom), Tableau, Looker, Braze, Brevo, Omniscend, Anthropic - Claude, OBS, PC, Steam, iOS, Android, Roblox, Meta Quest / VR platforms, Wordpress

Leadership: Cross-functional team leadership, contractor management, junior PM mentorship, stakeholder communication, business development support

EXPERIENCE

Associate Director of Product | Polyarc (Indie Game Studio w/ 40-50 employees making VR, console, and PC games) | Seattle, WA

Jan 2024 – Apr 2026

- Supported \$13M in business development contracts by creating pitch materials and product analysis for partnership conversations with major platform holders and publishers and participating in meetings to address product strategy questions.
- Built and maintained a back-end Live Ops toolset used across all active studio projects, enabling a lean 4-person team to design, schedule, and deploy live operations content across multiple titles simultaneously without dedicated engineering support per project.
- Managed Polyarc's product portfolio across prototype and development phases, establishing scope, team structure, and development goals for new projects in a rapidly shifting market.
- Partnered with Product Marketing to develop go-to-market strategies for two unannounced projects targeting platforms and genres new to the studio.
- Designed and executed community re-engagement campaigns to maintain player relationships and support retention across the studio's fan ecosystem.
- Created competitive analysis and market landscape research to inform product decisions and prioritization across the portfolio.

Principal Product Manager | Polyarc (Indie Game Studio w/ 40-50 employees making VR, console, and PC games) | Seattle, WA

Sep 2022 – Dec 2023

- Partnered with Marketing and PR to negotiate and secure Glassbreakers' placement in the Meta Horizon+ subscription (44.3% click-to-install and 400% DAU increase) without sacrificing engagement (65% of new players stayed 25+ minutes in their first session).

- Defined Glassbreakers free-to-play roadmap and ran A/B tests on messaging, offers, and live ops content to update regularly.
- Owned all Polyarc user research efforts (recruitment, interviews, playtesting, surveys) and competitive analysis to deliver insights and relatable player personas to the team that made a noticeable impact on development.
- Built Polyarc Creator Program and drove development of in-game content creation tools (from PRD to launch) filling a gap in the VR creator ecosystem.
- Grew studio Discord from zero to 3,000 active players where players felt like active partners in the game's development and also gave them a place to stay engaged after launch. Built community architecture: moderation structure, playtest program, feedback collection mechanisms, events for engagement and retention.
- Defined data taxonomy and managed contractor relationships to build dashboards for monitoring game health across acquisition, retention, and monetization.

Director of Product Performance | Supersocial acquired by Super League (Startup w/ 20-30 employees making IP collaborations for Roblox) | Remote

Oct 2021 – Sep 2022

- Owned development goals, economy design, and weekly performance reporting across a portfolio of 10 Roblox games, establishing KPI benchmarks, data taxonomy, and actuals-vs-plan cadence used across all titles.
- Led product strategy for NARS Cosmetics IP partnership alongside the creative director and production coordinator and launched seasonal NARS Color Quest experience (42M total visits and 86% approval rating) which was later cited by Forbes as foundational to NARS' broader virtual commerce strategy.
- Designed and iterated virtual currency systems, IAP mix, and progression economies across the portfolio, including monetization hypothesis testing that directly informed live economy changes across multiple titles.
- Grew player communities across Discord and Roblox Groups for multiple titles simultaneously, launching moderator and guild programs that deepened player investment and retention.
- Supported Ghostopia, a Supersocial flagship title that reached 2.1M visits with 88% rating, that was prominently featured at Roblox Developer Conference 2021.
- Mentored junior Roblox developers on game production fundamentals and business metrics.

Senior Product Manager | Netflix Games - Boss Fight Entertainment (Mid-size studio w/ 100-150 employees making Midcore & Casual mobile games) | Remote

Oct 2020 – Sep 2021

- Led an all-star cross-discipline Live Ops strike team for myVEGAS Bingo, delivering events, offers, feature releases, and updates.
- Designed monetization strategy, ran A/B tests, and built targeted offer and messaging segmentation that increased LTV by 240% in the first six months.
- Led redesign of the in-game inbox for myVEGAS Bingo, improving player-facing UX while streamlining the backend so the team could make a bigger impact in less time.
- Owned CRM strategy and executed email and in-game campaigns.
- Mentored junior PMs including career coaching, writing PRDs, Live Ops best practices, A/B testing data analysis, and drafting reports for stakeholder management.
- Partnered with Design to balance the complex Social Casino game economy and ensure fairness.
- Presented weekly performance updates to keep studio leadership and publishing partner informed.

Senior Product Manager | Big Fish Games (Casual Game Studio w/ 400-500 employees making PC & mobile games) | Seattle, WA

Jan 2018 – Sep 2020

- Product Owner for free-to-play Interactive Fiction game with simulation meta-progression and a multi-million-dollar P&L.
- Conducted market research and competitive analysis to identify emerging trends in lifestyle and simulation gaming and translate these into a clear development roadmap.
- Led an internal team of 20 while managing 25 external contract authors.
- Created & scaled content operations to produce hundreds of hours of IF content efficiently and cost-effectively.

- Led development of proprietary author tools and a custom game engine.
- Collaborated with the Research Team to design and refine UX based on player feedback.
- Communicated product vision, priorities, and outcomes to stakeholders and senior leadership through Soft Launch in Summer 2020.

Lead Producer | Big Fish Games (Casual Game Studio w/ 400-500 employees making PC & mobile games) | Seattle, WA

2015 – 2017

- Product Owner for the Lifeline series, launching five games translated into seven languages with millions of downloads across Apple App Store, Google Play, PC, and Mac.
- Collaborated with Business Development to release games in Chinese markets, a first for Big Fish Games.
- Owned all social media, community, and promotional campaigns for the series.
- Owned CRM push & notification strategy iterating on timing, content, and targeting to drive re-engagement.

Sr. Technical Producer | Big Fish Games (Casual Game Studio w/ 400-500 employees making PC & mobile games) | Seattle, WA

2014 – 2015

- Founded strike team responsible for streamlining 3rd-party mobile game production.
- Launched repository of technical documentation, FAQs and troubleshooting frameworks that resulted in a 60% reduction in engineering support requests in one year.
- Product Manager for Big Fish SDK owned roadmap and spearheaded initiatives that improved the quality, efficiency, and integration experience for 3rd-party development.

Game Producer | Big Fish Games (Casual Game Studio w/ 400-500 employees making PC & mobile games) | Seattle, WA

2013 – 2014

- Managed a high volume of third-party mobile games, successfully launching over 50 titles across Apple App Store, Google Play, and Amazon Kindle.

Associate Game Producer | Big Fish Games (Casual Game Studio w/ 400-500 employees making PC & mobile games) | Seattle, WA

2010 – 2013

- Led mobile-first development of Big Fish IP, including Fairway Solitaire.
- Collaborated with Game Designer John Cutter to adapt Fairway Solitaire into Big Fish Games' first free-to-play mobile title.

Game Moderator & Customer Support | Big Fish Games (Casual Game Studio w/ 400-500 employees making PC & mobile games) | Seattle, WA

2008 – 2010

Managed online multiplayer communities for online / browser-based Java & Flash games (Big Sea Games and Faunasphere)

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Fine Arts | University of Arizona | Tucson, AZ

Aug 2002 – Dec 2006

- Graduated Magna Cum Laude
- Arizona State Certification for Secondary Education, 2006