

Needed Upgrades to Xbox Live

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Below are just three of the changes that I think the Xbox Live Spring Dashboard update should include to help Microsoft grow it's online advantage.

Online Game Save Storage. Microsoft needs to offer online game save storage for Xbox Live Gold members. This would be a huge advantage for owners who only have a core package and would be a great backup for those of us with a hard drive. It is not if a hard drive will fail, but when and currently I have no easy way to backup all of my game saves. This would also be great when you travel over to a friend's house to be able to get to all of your game saves without having to carry a memory card that may not be big enough to hold everything. Only offer it to people who are Gold membership

Web Browser. This doesn't have to be as fully featured as IE7, but it should be functional enough to do general surfing. I should be able to pause a game such as Splinter Cell Double Agent and be able to bring up the web browser to find the solution to that stupid email encryption hacking cube. (That was ridiculously hard!!) Unpause the game, play some more, then pause and open the browser and it should be on the same page I left it. It will in no way replace a regular PC web browser; only add to the pervasiveness of being able to access content from all of your connected devices. Only offer it for users with a hard drive and Xbox Gold level membership. The Windows XP download was only 14megs, so for the Xbox 360 I guess it might be 30megs since there are probably some items that are native in XP that would need to be included for the Xbox 360 version.

Enhance the Gold Membership level. Microsoft has just recently started offering game demos to Gold members first. This needs to be expanded. Themes and picture packs should be free to Gold members and cost Silver members. New Dashboard enhancements should be offered first to Gold, then months later to Silver. When new content hits that is available for everyone, Gold members need to have priority in the download queues. Have prizes and give a ways of various game related posters, shirts, stickers, etc. for Gold members only. It was good that Microsoft introduced the Silver level, but as a Gold member, I currently feel that I am subsidizing the features that the Silver members get for free. Gold members need to feel that they are getting a true service level like first class vs. coach. Right now it feels like my first class membership only allows me to board the plane first and sit in the front row of coach. I shouldn't have to see advertisements on my dashboard if I am a Gold member. Advertisements should be limited to Silver since they don't pay anything. For those of us who have been on Live since the beginning, give us a special look to our gamertag. Make us alumni or something like that.

Adding these items would nullify most of all the advantages that the PS3 has introduced and be innovative in offering features that the PS3 team hasn't even considered.