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Flipping The Switch Again

Written by [Samuel Colunga](#) on May 22, 2014 in [[e3 2013](#), [Flipping the Switch](#), [Jack Tretton](#), [Kinect](#), [Marc Whitten](#), [Microsoft](#), [PlayStation 4](#), [Price Drop](#), [samuel colunga](#), [Sony](#), [Xbox One](#)]

On June 10th, 2013, then President & CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment America Jack Tretton stepped onto the stage at E3. He dove into his spiel just as the Imagine Dragons song Radioactive started fading out. The press in attendance, and the people watching on live streams all across the world, waited and watched for Sony's official rebuttal to Microsoft's Xbox One announcement. The Internet was up in arms about Xbox One's DRM game sharing, periodic authentication and all games needing to be played online. The thing that upset them the most was Microsoft saying that Xbox One will come with Kinect, and be priced at \$499.

Sony capitalized on the opportunity and announced, on gaming's grandest stage, that PlayStation 4's games will include no DRM. The crowd erupted and the Internet went wild. Tretton smiled at the mass of people going crazy in the audience. A Sony chant started. The cameras panned over the jovial crowd. The entire scene was dark with a bright blue hue over everything. Camera flashes popped and as far as the eye could see there were cell phones being held up, all recording this monumental moment in gaming. It would forever be remembered as the day Microsoft got served in the most righteous way possible.



“I guess that’s a good thing,” Tretton quipped when the crowd died down a bit.

The next two bombs that Tretton lobbed were directly aimed at Microsoft. On the PlayStation 4 there would be no

online authentication required, and games won't need to be connected online to play. The final blow to Microsoft was delivered by Andrew House as he announced the price of the PlayStation 4: \$399. The ball was now in Microsoft's court.

Xbox's Live director of programming, Larry Hryb, went on the defensive, stating in an E3 interview that the DRM was built around the console, and there was no way to just flip a switch. A few days after getting blasted by its fans and after getting reamed by Sony, Microsoft did some damage control and flipped the switch. There would no longer be mandatory check-ins, games were now DRM free and you didn't have to be online all the time to play games. This reversal spawned a lot of jokes at the expense of Mr. Hryb and Microsoft, as well as a few funny memes.



The blowback was enough to get Microsoft to change their minds on their new policies. However, they insisted on keeping the price at \$499 and including Kinect. Marc Whitten, then Chief Product Officer of Xbox, mentioned in an interview that Xbox believes it brings value to gamers with its games and entertainment. Also, he put to rest any notion that the Kinect would ever be unbundled from the Xbox One.

The Xbox One and PlayStation 4 released on different days in November, both to over one million sales. The only difference was that the PlayStation 4 launched only in the United States, while Xbox One launched in many different countries. It was crystal clear that Sony had won the launch day wars. For the next few months Sony would continue to keep a lead against Microsoft. This did not bode well for Xbox One, which had many people remarking that the console was being hampered by its high price and Kinect bundling.

Microsoft originally said it would not unbundle the Kinect because it was part of the Xbox One's features. Without the Kinect the gamer would not be able to sign in with voice and do all of these other cool things that the Xbox was touted to do through voice. "You wouldn't get the full Xbox One experience." They reminded people that when Microsoft took away DRM and online authentication, many gamers wondered where the promised game sharing feature went. Some people seemed to have not realized that online game sharing was part of those features that they demanded Microsoft take away.



With the release of Titanfall, things seemed to pick up for a moment. Fans and industry insiders believed that the lack of a system seller was keeping units on shelves. Up until that point the Xbox One didn't have much to brag about when it came to exclusives besides Ryse: Son of Rome, Forza Motorsport 5 and Dead Rising 3. Sony didn't exactly have a game that made you want to run out and buy them either; Infamous: Second Son and Killzone: Shadow Fall weren't games that would have mobs of people clamoring outside of game stores. Titanfall was the game that everyone had been waiting on. It sold a lot of consoles for Microsoft. While Titanfall is currently the number one selling game so far, the PlayStation 4 console is still in the lead. Titanfall gave Xbox One a push, but it wasn't enough.

Slightly over a week ago, Microsoft caved in and flipped the switch again, unbundling Kinect from the Xbox One console, thus dropping the price down to \$399. Also, Microsoft announced that some Xbox Live Gold exclusives like Netflix streaming would now be able for all players on the Xbox One. It wasn't a huge moment like the one Sony had on the stage at E3, but the announcement caused enough of a stir in the gaming community that people rejoiced all over the Internet. Whether this was a desperation attempt to spur sales, or whether it was completely planned would be the subject of great debate for the next week.

Microsoft really wants the money of the moms in the mini-vans, who love the Kinect because it gives their kids active and fun games that they can play day or night. Unbundling the Kinect will marginally affect this demographic, only because the original bundled version is still available, and chances are they've bought it already. What both Microsoft and PlayStation are vying for are the dollars of the general public, the non-gamer that just wants to pop in a game and relax. If a Lego game or Madden is what they prefer, these console makers are more than happy to sell it to them. Taking away the Kinect makes the Xbox One \$100 cheaper. It's what the people wanted from day one. A great number of gamers didn't want the product because they felt something like the Kinect was going to spy on them, but they bought it anyway because they are loyal Xbox fans, and they love their console. These people are willing to shell out the cash to purchase whatever Microsoft is selling. No one is worried about them; Microsoft has their money.



As far as the initiative to remove certain entertainment apps from being strictly XBL Gold, it was a right move. Even back in the days of the last console generation, a great number of consumers, when faced with choice of either an Xbox 360 or a PlayStation 3, a great number of them went with the PlayStation 3 because viewing certain apps was free, as was playing multi-player games. At least with this move Microsoft is taking away that shred of doubt prospective buyers would have in their product simply because things on PlayStation are free. Removing these would-be excuses from prospective customers shows that Microsoft is putting a lot of faith in the strength of their games lineup.

With both gaming consoles on par with each other as far as price goes, will this recent tactic translate into big sales for Xbox One? Will they finally be able to pull ahead of PlayStation 4? Will their go-to franchises such as Gears of War and Halo still have enough legs to carry the company into the next generation of console gaming? Or will it be a day late and a dollar short for the grand old company? All people can argue about now are games and graphics. The Xbox One price drop goes into effect on June 9th. These next few years are going to be some of the most exciting times in gaming, and no one should miss them.

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[Chris Brown](#) May 23, 2014 at 10:02 am -

I really find it silly that people thought the Kinect would spy on them. Also, the Kinect is for not just those soccer moms who want exercise games. I use the Kinect on my Xbox One all the time to navigate from game to game, watching TV, or using entertainment apps. For my experience on the close, the Kinect gives me a better experience than the PS4 (which is a great console in its own right).

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