



## Five minutes with... Jackie Jones and Jess Lanzillo.

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Meet two phenomenal leaders from Hasbro's Wizards of the Coast: Jackie Jones and Jess Lanzillo.

As Vice President – Creative for MAGIC: THE GATHERING (MTG), Jackie leads a talented group of creatives who bring their unique skills together to create the rich characters, immersive settings, compelling stories and beautiful art that make the game a one-of-a-kind experience.

As Vice President – Franchise and Product for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS (D&D), Jess oversees the strategic direction and product development for the D&D franchise, ensuring the team creates amazing experiences that bring people together through storytelling and adventure.

Last week, Jackie and Jess participated in a live conversation at the United Nations for the 2nd annual Games and Sustainable Development Goals Summit. Moderated by Anjali Bhimani, they shared what their teams are doing to design games with inclusivity and gender equality in mind.

Below, we check in with Jess and Jackie about the Summit, why representation in gaming matters, and what inspires them to create every day!



### Driving change with data.

**Jackie:** The Games & SDG Summit was an amazing opportunity to connect with social impact organizations, creators, innovators, and researchers who share our belief in using the power of games to affect real world change. I loved hearing from creators about the innovative projects they have in flight that intentionally use the power of gaming to drive change.

Additionally, it was fantastic to learn about the latest research from organizations like The Geena Davis Institute and UNESCO. Their work provides the crucial data needed to help drive change in the industry. Combining insights from both creators and researchers was incredibly inspiring.

### The evolution of gaming: welcoming more diverse voices.

**Jess:** The industry has changed dramatically since I started my career - we've seen a huge shift from gaming being seen as this niche hobby to becoming a mainstream form of entertainment and connection. There's also been a wonderful evolution in who feels welcome, both at the gaming table AND in the development pit.

**Jackie:** One of the most significant changes I've observed in the industry has been the recognition that to speak authentically to a more diverse audience, we need a diversity of voices contributing to the creation of our games. This is something I am incredibly proud of with the MAGIC Creative team. We have a wide variety of voices and perspectives contributing to the creative process, both within our team and through collaboration with hundreds of artists around the world. It's this collective effort that ensures our game resonates deeply and authentically with players from all walks of life.

### The ripple effect of representation.

**Jess, on D&D:** I'm particularly proud of how we've evolved our character creation systems and art direction over recent years. Our artwork now showcases a much broader range of people, body types, and cultural influences. The positive feedback we've gotten from players who feel truly seen has been incredible.

Everyone deserves to feel like they can be the hero of their own story. But what really moves me is how this sense of empowerment creates ripple effects in communities.

When someone realizes they can be the hero at the gaming table, they start to see opportunities to be the hero in their neighborhood, their school, their workplace. They learn that their voice matters, that they can affect change, that they can inspire others.

### From representation to co-creation.

**Jackie, on MTG:** One powerful example of our journey towards inclusivity is our growing awareness of unconscious biases and our willingness to seek additional perspectives during the creative development process. This openness has led to richer creativity and better products.

Representation is vital but doing it thoughtfully and accurately is even more important. When we draw inspiration from real-world cultures, we don't just review our work for mistakes. We engage in a co-creation process with our consultants. This collaboration helps us uncover new opportunities and infuse our products with unique, impactful details.

### The inspiring impact of gaming.

**Jackie:** Watching my daughter dive into gaming and seeing the types of games and content she gravitates towards is incredibly inspiring. It's amazing to see how games engage her imagination and allow her to express herself in new ways. It's a beautiful reminder of the influence we have through the games we create. It's about sparking that sense of wonder and creativity, and seeing it happen firsthand with my daughter is the best inspiration I could ask for.

**Jess:** The hobby gaming community just constantly amazes me. From actual play shows revolutionizing storytelling to LARP creators crafting immersive experiences to indie TTRPG designers pushing mechanical boundaries - they're all innovating in ways I never imagined. Seeing how they transform our

gaming into something completely unexpected and amazing... that's what keeps me going.

**Next up: new audiences, new worlds, new tech.**

**Jackie:** I'm eager to see how we can tell MAGIC's stories through other mediums and create new experiences that resonate with different age groups. We want to connect with a wider audience and welcome more gamers into the gathering. We're also thrilled about MAGIC's upcoming Universes Beyond partnerships with big names like Marvel and Final Fantasy.

**Jess:** I'm thrilled about how technology will help make tabletop gaming even more accessible while preserving what makes it special — human connection and collaborative storytelling.

**Calling all Geek Girls!**

*Hear more from Jackie and Jess at this weekend's GeekGirlCon 2024 in Seattle, Washington. As speakers on the "Drawing Our Cards" panel, moderated by Wizards of the Coast's Kristin Chan, they'll dive into their journeys in the world of gaming, sharing career highlights and how they've reshaped their leadership by embracing their strengths, authenticity, and resilience.*

Learn more here: <https://geekgirlcon.com/schedule/>