HQ Trivia will run some games without cash prizes

HQ Trivia surprised players yesterday with a different type of prize: in-game points, instead of the usual multi-thousand-dollar prize pool. The change is an experiment and not a sign of financial disaster, the company says, but players could see more points-only games in the future.

Players complained about the lack of a cash reward on Reddit and Twitter, saying they play the game for the cash prizes. The change also revived concerns about the company's health. HQ's ranking in Apple's App Store fell to around 1,000 last week, down from the top 10 a year ago, according to App Annie. In the past several months, reports have pointed to a shrinking audience and a CEO change that came with its own complications.

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There will continue to be games with cash rewards, says Brandon Teitel, SVP of programming and partnerships at HQ. The company recently began dividing the almost month-long runs of the show into seasons, and Teitel says the season that began on Monday — season two — will give away more cash than the last.

Players will also be able to compete for points over the course of a season. "We look at it as another way to win HQ," Teitel says. "I think a lot of people traditionally have thought it's really hard to win HQ, and it is. Not everyone is going to win the game, but getting credit for the questions that you got right feels really good."

The current season will end on February 28th, at which time points will reset.

Points aren’t new to HQ. People have already been able to collect them for correct answers. Users can also gather them by sharing that they’re playing the game on social media and now for winning games. Those points can be redeemed for in-game rewards, like the ability to stay in the game up until question 10 without having to actually get an answer correct.

Tonight’s game, Teitel says, will have prize money at the end, but it will also award points for all correct answers.

“It’s definitely a loyalty play to incentivize people to come back,” Teitel says. Even if a player hasn’t won a game, they likely answer at least a couple questions correctly and are rewarded for doing so. That, HQ hopes, might make them come back night after night.

Correction 1/23, 8:24 PM ET: *This post initially stated that the second season started yesterday, but it started on Monday. We regret the error.*

https://www.theverge.com/2019/1/23/18194495/hq-trivia-sports-point-system-money-prize