Scott Jellen
Software Developer | Product-Minded Systems Thinker
linkedin.com/in/scottjellen
scottjellen.com

Public Spec #1: Surface "Surprise Me" at the System Level on Xbox

---

🏹 Title

Surface "Surprise Me" on Xbox Dashboard & Guide

📈 Problem

Xbox's "Surprise Me" feature is a smart, underutilized tool designed to help users quickly pick a game. But it's buried deep in the Library UI, making it effectively invisible to most users. This limits its ability to reduce choice fatigue and drive game engagement.

🔍 Insight

- Many users open the Xbox dashboard not knowing what to play.

- "Surprise Me" solves a real user problem but is hidden.

- Most engagement friction comes from *indecision*, not interface.

◆ Proposal

Add system-level entry points to "Surprise Me":

1. Header Icon (Primary Recommendation)

- Add a "Surprise Me" icon in the Xbox top navigation bar (icon to match internal UI standards)

- Tooltip: "Not sure what to play? Surprise Me."

- Tooltip may also appear dynamically after a short period of inactivity

2. Xbox Guide Integration (Secondary)

- Add "Surprise Me" to the Guide (accessed via Xbox button)

- Position next to or below "My games & apps"

- Icon should either match the header icon or reuse the existing Surprise Me button from the Library

- Guide has ample space for inclusion without disrupting core navigation

3. Optional: Dashboard Tile

- Add a dedicated "Surprise Me" tile to the dashboard, similar in style and placement to existing system tiles (e.g., Game Pass, Store).

- Tile could be dynamic and context-aware — showcasing a randomly selected available title with a visual preview.

- Clicking the tile would trigger the Surprise Me modal.

- Complements the header icon while offering a larger visual affordance for discovery.

🎨 UX Considerations

- Consistent with Xbox's playful, assistive tone

- Offers layered entry points: always-visible (header), reflexive (Guide), visually engaging (dashboard tile)

- Dashboard tile aligns with existing system visuals and supports quick discovery

- Tooltip timing on header icon enhances discoverability without clutter

- Surprise Me modal remains unchanged, ensuring familiarity and no additional learning curve
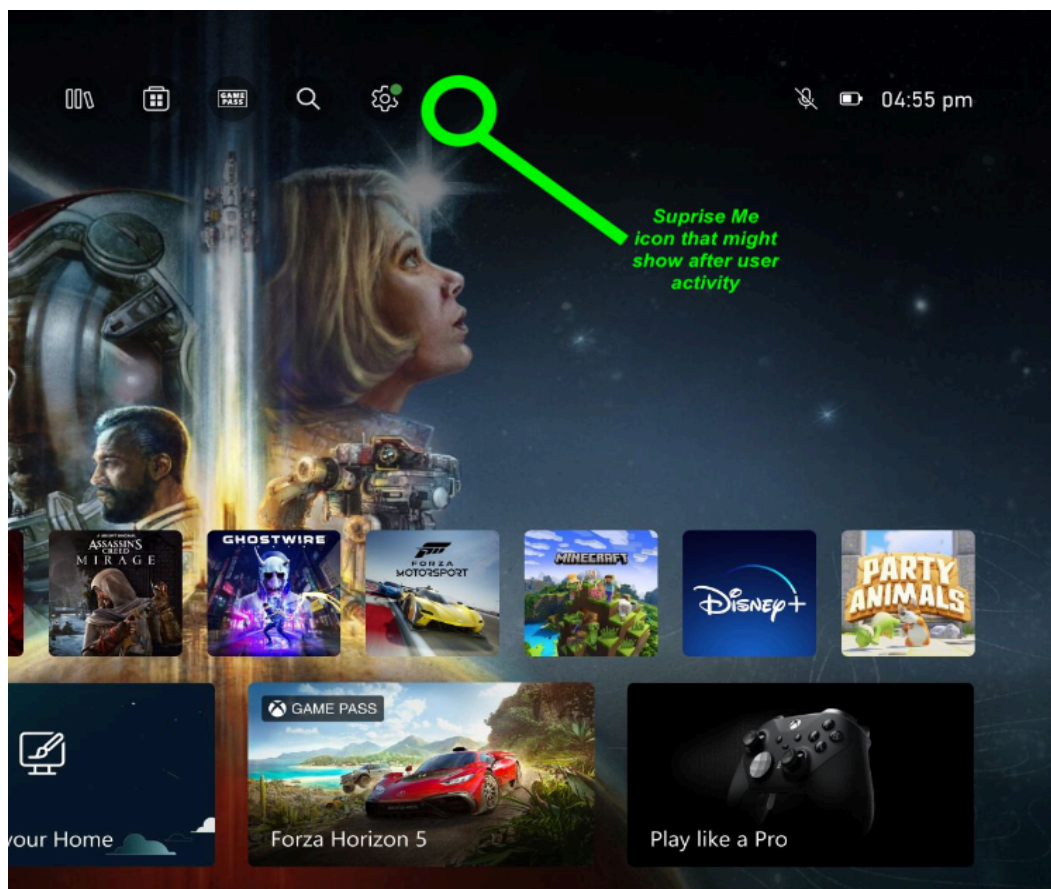
🖼️ Visual Mockups

Figure 1: Proposed header icon placement in Xbox top navigation
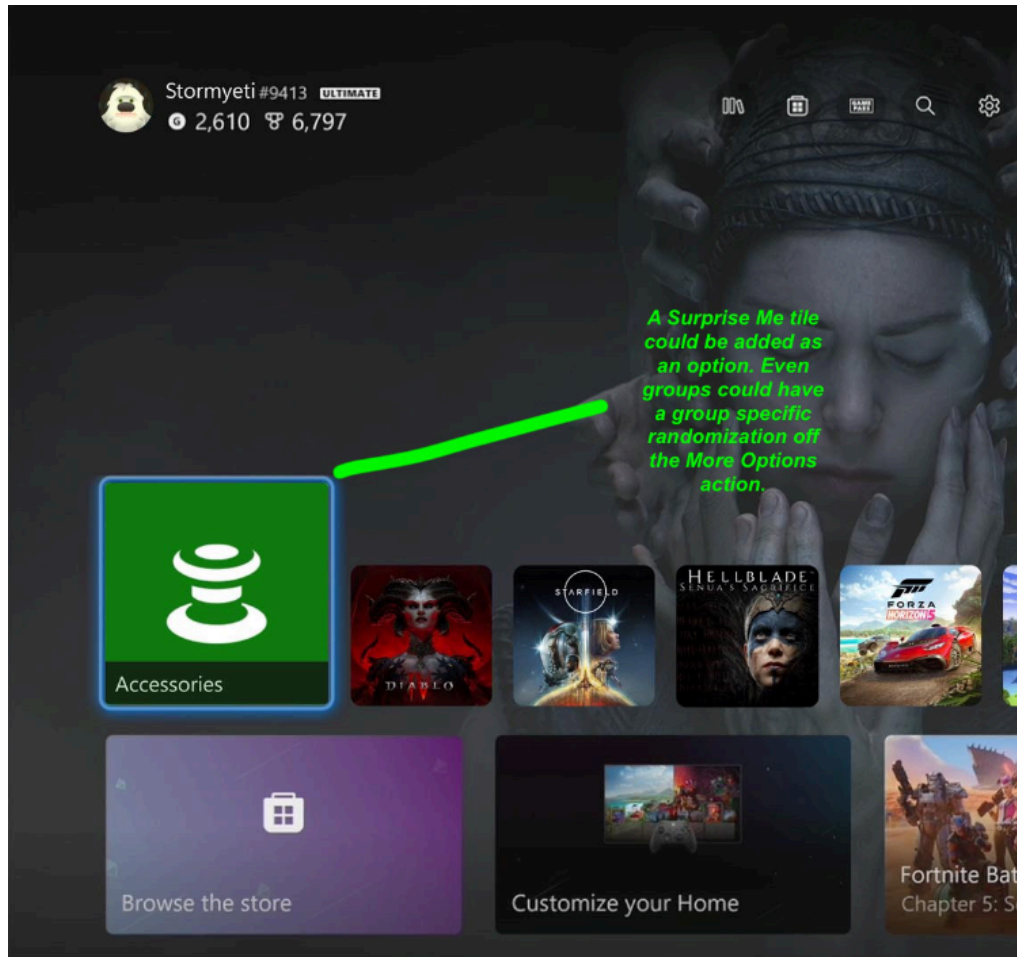
Figure 2: Dashboard tile showing Surprise Me entry in context

Note: All visuals are real screenshots with annotations for clarity. Images from Xbox.com.

📊 Success Metrics (Proxies)

Feature Discovery

- Increase in clicks to Surprise Me from header or Guide

- Comparison of Library-initiated usage before/after launch

Behavioral Lift

- Increase in number of games launched via Surprise Me

- Time-to-play reduced (for users who previously idled on dashboard)

Cross-Sell Potential

- Store clicks driven by Surprise Me → "See in Store" button

- Discovery of Game Pass titles through random surfacing

User Feedback Signals

- Improved perception in dashboard feedback

- Organic mention pickup on Reddit or forums

❓ Open Questions / Dependencies

1. Library Access at Surface Level

- What subset of the user's game library is available to system-level UI components like the dashboard, Guide, or header?

- Is there parity with the Library version of Surprise Me, or does surface-level access require scoped logic (e.g., installed games only)?

2. Iconography and UI Standards

- Is there an internally approved icon or visual standard for Surprise Me that aligns with Xbox design system conventions?

- Should the tile, header, and Guide entry share the same visual asset?

3. Guide Menu Extensibility

- Can the Xbox Guide support persistent or context-aware entries like Surprise Me without disrupting current user flows?

- Are there platform constraints or user testing considerations that would affect adding new options at this level?

4. Tooltip Behavior and Timing

- Can tooltips or soft prompts be triggered based on idle time on the dashboard or Guide?

- If so, what is the system's current threshold for interpreting inactivity?

5. Existing Feature Tracking

- Is Surprise Me currently tracked for usage metrics internally?

- If yes, do logs distinguish between library-initiated use and other entry points?

Created by Scott Jellen as a public product exploration.