Implementing Gamification in the Workplace

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ABSTRACT

We will begin by defining gamification and explaining how gamification in the workplace can assist companies and employees alike. We will look at three real world examples of how gamification has improved customer interaction, employee contribution, and the encouragement of idea innovation. We will weigh the benefits, risks, and implementation measures that could be applied to overhaul DePaul University's D2L and Campus Connect sites in order to provide an enjoyable, engaged way for students and faculty to be more involved with their university through the implementation of game-like features.

KEYWORDS

Engage; Challenge; Motivation; Achievement; Recognition

INTRODUCTION

There are a number of buzzwords in the tech world right now, including cloud computing, Internet of Things, and gamification. Gamification in the workplace, sometimes also called gamification for business, is defined as the concept of applying game design and mechanics to digital experiences to improve engagement, motivation, and loyalty. Gamification can be applied to any number of fields. Education games can be used for students and employees alike to *engage* their interest, provide a sense of *recognition*, *achievement*, enjoyment, and maintain a positive attitude towards their work. Gamification works by exploiting the natural human desire for competition, trivia *challenges*, status building, pride, and desire for rewards. We will focus on the business aspect of gamification in this paper. According to Elena Bertozzi, a professor of digital game design and development at Quinnipiac University, "Something as simple as a scoring system can motivate employees to change their behavior. It is difficult to teach motivation. That's what games can do. Game developers look at a situation and figure out how to persuade people to *engage* in a specific activity by turning the situation into a more competitive one [5]." It is crucial that companies have a clear and desired outcome to measure game success. One common theme to games in the workforce is the use of points and badges for activities that are crucial to a company's core competencies or for activities that workers are doing poorly. Normal activities that are expected or that employees already do well should not require gamification. Examples of tasks that would benefit from gamification include customer service, safety seminars, an alternative to other annual training courses and requirements, the use and ordering of office supplies, and

even carpooling. So now that we know what tasks can be gamified, how would a development team go about gamifying mundane office tasks? The answer lies in common gaming techniques that are nearly universal to most video and computer games since the early days of Pong and Atari. Gartner, an advisory firm providing information technology related insight, identifies four game techniques for the business process professional to understand what the tools are, how they work, and how to map the right game technique to the right action/behavior for the task [4]:

- Points - A visible metric that associates value with an action
- Levels and *achievements* - A cohesive series of positions, milestones or point thresholds; badges
- *Challenges* and competitions - Events or tasks one must complete to reach individual or group goals
- Leaderboards - List how participants rank against each other

One fear of business analysts is that gamification may not obtain mainstream popularity in the workplace. A survey by advertising/communications firm Saatchi & Saatchi found that more than 75% of 18 to 45-year-old respondents in the U.S. were "extremely, very or somewhat interested in working for a company that uses gamification as an incentive [4]."

CASE STUDY 1: GROUPON AND CLICKY

I work for Groupon and I can honestly say that the majority of my job tasks are often repetitive and monotonous in nature and could benefit from some gamification to keep things interesting. Groupon's Chicago headquarters has 2,000 employees working in that one location alone. I just learned from my research that a development team in Chicago implemented a gamification feature on the Groupon website in 2012 [2]. This feature is called "Clicky," who is a carnival-like, clickable wheel face and a good example of a gamification effort. Clicky peers at customers from the side column and encourages them to click him. Unlike spam, Clicky entices customers to spin him in order to receive discounts ranging from nothing to $5-100 off select products. There is no annoying sign in feature, since users can do so via Facebook integration. Users get a spin every 24 hours and may receive additional spins for sharing their interest in Groupon over social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. Many users will proceed to give Groupon brand *recognition* through their

personal social media sites and in order to continue engaging with Clicky for the chance to spin and win big discounts. Clicky achieved some criticism and limited success, mostly in the form of 'industry buzz;' people writing articles and sharing on Facebook and other social media outlets.

Figure 1. Clicky the Clickable Value-Wheel Game: Groupon website's gamification effort.

Case Study 1 Recommendation for DePaul Sites

Clicky reminds me of another company's gamified character, Microsoft Office's Clippy, an interactive paperclip with eyes who assists users with the Office Suite's many features. DePaul could implement their mascot, Dibs, short for Demon In a Blue Suit, to interact with students on D2L. Options could include a clickable wheel or lottery feature where students could win sporting or film tickets to DePaul events, rather than the email invites sent periodically from the University to all students and staff. Dibs, or any other gamified mascot of choosing, could also help new students with a comprehensive beginner's tutorial to navigating the D2L site, serve as an intermediary for announcements.

CASE STUDY 2: THE UNITED KINGDOM DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS WITH IDEA STREET

The United Kingdom's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has used game mechanics to create an engaging environment for developing and trading innovations from ideation to a business case in an engaging, human-centric environment. The result is a never-ending innovation machine where people from anywhere within an organization can make a meaningful contribution to organizational change. The United Kingdom's DWP is responsible for ensuring employment opportunity and equality for all, pension policy, and is a key player in tackling child poverty. In order to meet these goals, the DWP partakes in both top-down strategic initiatives and bottom-up idea creation. DWP employs more than 120,000 people, which provides a vast resource to harness for innovative idea creation. Great ideas are selected for additional consideration and implementation. According to

David Cotterill, director of innovation, the challenge was "finding a way to harness all that creativity at the front line. People wanted to help make things better, and all we had to do was create a structured way for them to do that while providing them with an incentive to do so. The gaming aspect is that incentive [1]." The approach DWP took was to create a market where employees could contribute ideas, collaborate with others, and obtain *recognition* for participating. This market is called "Idea Street" and was launched in 2008. It is build on the Enterprise Spigit platform, with game mechanics integrated for DWP's needs. Employees participate with Idea Street from idea creation through development and are rewarded by a point system accordingly. The points are called 'DWPeas' and are awarded for the generation of ideas, further development of the ideas of others, and also invest their DWPeas in the ideas they find to be the most promising. Employees, commonly referred to as "shareholders," can also lose DWPeas for ideas that are not chosen for implementation. The outcome is an active market with a queue of fluid, changing ideas. A "buzz index" emphasizes the ideas that are discussed the most. When an idea causes the buzz index to rise, more employees are drawn into contributing or commenting to the development of the idea. These ideas will gain momentum and the team behind them will frequently get budget managers to back the project's development, and eventually, investment. DWP realized that getting Idea Street established was a more difficult challenge than anticipated, particularly with regards to support of senior management and a weak initial attraction of participants. The *motivations* for contributing to Idea Street are many and sound. Idea Street has more than 5,000 registered users and has generated thousands of ideas, of which more than 75% are currently active and 5-10% have gone forward to implementation [1]. Naturally, people desire to be included in the most promising ideas, which propels ongoing participation.

Case Study 2 Recommendation for DePaul Sites

I took an HCI course that encouraged brainstorming for ideas and collaboration through a site called Stormboard. Ideas were posted on "virtual" sticky notes, similar ideas were then grouped together, and then the ideas with the most traction moved forward into implementation. DePaul's Campus Connect is a Javascript expert's runtime nightmare. The user interface is daunting for first time users and is not efficient even for seasoned students and faculty. Perhaps a DePaul course could incorporate an idea market, in collaboration with DePaul's technical support team, to identify ways (ideas) to improve the site's interface and underlying code inefficiencies. The ideas with the greatest momentum would be reviewed for development and the DePaul Administration would make a final budget decision. An integrated team of DePaul students and contracted expert developers would resolve the recommended fixes within a reasonable budget.

CASE STUDY 3: XEROX'S YAMMER SOLUTION

Many people recognize Xerox for the printers, copiers, and printer paper they have used in their homes and offices for decades. With the 2010 acquisition of Affiliated Computer Services, Inc. (ACS), the size of the company's workforce more than doubled. Coupled with that growth, the need to share ideas and information as well as keeping a competitive advantage became more important than ever. Xerox began implementing Yammer, a Microsoft Enterprise Social Network product, in 2010. Since that implementation, Xerox employees have been able to obtain the information they need faster than ever before. Xerox prides itself on technological innovation. "Innovation is what Xerox is all about," says Vice President of Corporate Lean Six Sigma and Business Transformation Gregory North. "Anything we can do to speed up our innovation process is going to be key to our success [6]." Yammer has also helped employees find the courage to start asking difficult questions and sharing ideas, which go a long way to improving coordinated efforts and running programs. These are some of the reasons why Yammer was identified as a way to share and explore ideas and experiments amongst workers, many of whom have little or no interaction on a daily basis. Yammer has helped direct priceless customer feedback to the relevant customer service teams and bring those teams closer to the development and business process teams. The insight from this interaction strengthens Xerox's product and service offerings. For Manager of Managed Print Services Insight Programs Patricia Hill, that capability is game changing. "There was great power in being able to bring these companies together in a way that takes the best of both cultures and combines it to form the right DNA," she says [6]. Xerox was able to unify talented employees by connecting them around company projects and personal interests to achieve even greater success. Perhaps Kate Dobbertin, a Project Manager of Communication and Collaboration at Xerox, said it best: "I remember thinking one of my first days here, why is it so much easier to get an answer about where I should eat tonight from a friend on Facebook than it is to figure out who I need to talk to [in order] to get my work done [3]?" The results of Yammer have been overwhelmingly positive. Information flow has been streamlined by posting queries on Yammer that are answered in minutes, rather than spending hours searching through company servers and waiting for responses to emails. Yammer allowed the seamless merging and integration of Xerox and ACS communications and contact information. Employees can locate other employees' roles and expertise and use that information to reach out to them and collaborate on large, inter-disciplinary projects.

Figure 2. Xerox uses Yammer to connect and communicate employees, content, conversations, and data in a single collaborative location.

Case Study 3 Recommendation for DePaul Sites

Students and faculty alike could benefit from an Enterprise Social Network. We've used services such as Piazza and Slack, but what if faculty members want to discuss a new class feature and are not sure if it will be well accepted by their peers? What if students in the suburbs would be interested in carpooling, but are unaware of others who may be looking for the same? Having large, open conversations through an integrated service such as Yammer within D2L, could bring students out of their respective small classrooms and faculty out of their respective small departments and expose them to a greater pool of peers within the DePaul community who may share the same interests, questions, or concerns.

GAMIFICATION IS NOT NEW TO DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

DePaul University has one of the best game development programs in the country. I have used aspects of gamification myself in several classes. In my Globally Distributed Software Development course we developed a Tetris game, which was a fun way to practice a real-world partitioning project. In my Frameworks for Web Application Development course, the instructor created a site called Scuiz® that functioned as an interactive quiz system, in which students created and answered Python language and web development related quiz questions for their fellow classmates. Well-formulated questions earned a point, poorly formulated questions cost a point, and each question answered earned a point. Students had to create (post) questions in order to receive new ones to answer. The point system let you know where you stood in comparison to the class point leader and encouraged students to be more active and engaged in the learning process. Scuiz turned out to be a huge gamification success in this course.

CONCLUSION

We have seen three case studies that convey how gamification has improved customer interaction, employee contribution, and the encouragement of idea innovation in three separate companies on two continents. Though they all use different gamification programs for different expected results, they share many of the same underlining goals. *Engage* employees in collaborative, team projects. *Challenge* employees to communicate with other employees and customers. The use of a point or badge based system for *motivation*. The *achievement* of personal and professional goals in a fun, competitive manner. *Recognition* of brand loyalty by providing customers rewards and discounts. We will continue to see gamification implemented in the workforce and many experts agree that it will be as commonplace as smart phones by the end of this decade.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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