The gamification of project management

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Abstract

This paper describes the added value of using gamification in project management education. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the advantages of gamified project management courses versus the classic ex cathedra set up. After an introduction to the concept of gamification, this paper evaluates an actual case study of a gamified PMBOK-based project management course for junior project managers in Europe. The evaluation is done using the four-level Kirkpatrick evaluation model for training, evaluating the reactions of the participants, the level of cognitive learning, and the way actual behavior changed and finally, the return on investment of this gamified course.

Introduction

In this paper I will explain the basic concepts of gamification and describe an actual case in which gamification is applied within the area of project management education. I will compare the gamified course ("serious game") to the standard classroom set up. I will point out the differences and the added value of the use of gamification, based on actual findings gathered for more than 10 years of the company using gamification in their project management course. The evaluation of the gamified course will be done on four levels, using the Kirkpatrick model for evaluating training.

Introduction to Gamification

Gamification is the application of design concepts and techniques, loyalty programs and behavioral economics in a business environment (Zichermann, 2013, p. xii). Gamification is often applied in the area of user engagement or customer engagement and training. Gamification is a fairly new trend. It only showed up as a Google Trending topic since 2010 (Zichermann, 2013, p. xii). Recently, the research institute Gartner positioned gamification in the hype cycle for emerging technologies at the top of the "inflated expectations" phase (Exhibit 1).
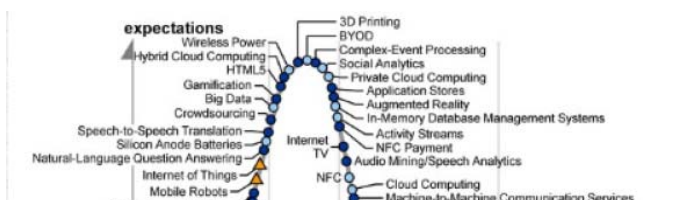
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