

Gamification – Creating Addictive User Experiences (intermediate)

What is Gamification

Being able to harness the key principles of gamification allows developers to have a deep understanding of user expectations, maximizing the overall user experience.

Human beings have been playing games throughout the centuries. They are part of the human experience.

Gamification Defined

Gamification is the art of adding game-like elements to experiences which traditionally do not involve fun or games. As it's a young industry, it should be easier to get a "foot in the door" of gamification companies with demand for experienced designers far outstripping supply, and that means those businesses are going to be keen to take a chance on less-experienced but well-qualified designers.

It's Not Game Theory

Game theory is a mathematical discipline which involves predicting the behaviour of complex and seemingly random systems. You can see the application of game theory, in a very simple example, above. The good news is that gamification has nothing to do with game theory, and you won't need a calculator to understand and implement gamification in your designs.

So What Is Gamification?

Simply put, **gamification is the application of game-like thought and game-mechanics to contexts that have not traditionally been game-driven.** That's not to say that we as designers should set out to trivialise the more serious aspects of life, however. The idea rings truer of making those serious aspects more inviting so that users may be more likely to engage with what otherwise would involve their resigning themselves to mind-numbing but important tasks.

There's More to Gamification than Learning, but Learning it is Vital

The concept has expanded in later years. You'll find gamification alive and kicking in a range of disciplines around you, including improving user-engagement (on sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook), physical exercise (think the Nintendo Wii's "Wii Fit"), making return-on-investment calculations, data refining, timekeeping, marketing and more.

What proves the popularity of the concept is the range of highly successful innovations that have taken the world by storm. In particular, as people have become increasingly mobile with technology (and with ever-increasing expectations of interacting with their devices as they move), perhaps nothing has come to embody the concept in this sense more than the bevy of wearable tech marvels offered by Fitbit, Garmin or Misfit. Set this against the harsh reality that obesity and its sequel such as type 2 diabetes are no laughing matter for the healthcare systems in many Western countries, and you can easily see the benefits to be had from this dimension of gamification. And that's it—the ingenious touch of wearable fitness trackers is the gamification of physical exercise. Gone are the days of 'going for a mile's walk' without knowing more—and it's that knowledge that empowers folks to compete with their own personal records and their friends.

Does it Work?

By the mid-2010s, gamification would remain a relatively recent discipline. As such, not a sufficiently wide body of evidence by that point had been able to corroborate its exact effectiveness. A review of the literature to date has shown a positive correlation that **gamification does increase the effectiveness of the activity it is applied to.** Of course, a lot depends on how gamification is used – a gamification can only work if the players find it motivating, interesting and fun. There are plenty of bad games in the straight gaming environment and plenty of badly designed gamification exercises, too. That's a good thing, however, as it helps in knowing what to avoid doing.

What Are The Ingredients of Gamification?

By the second half of the 2010s, there would still be no recipes for gamification—the best practices would continue to evolve—such are the wages of living on the cutting edge of technology!

Happily, some frameworks are on hand to help us as designers to structure gamification projects. Janaki Kumar and Mario Herger have developed a simple framework or methodology for creating successful gamification experiences. Their approach is called, “Player-Centred Design” and involves using the following five steps:

1. Know Your Player
2. Identify The Mission
3. Understand Human Motivation
4. Apply Mechanics
5. Manage, Monitor and Measure

Janaki and Mario have a lot of experience in enterprise-gamification, and this process is the result of that experience. You’ll want to monitor and review the results from your own gamification exercises and draw your own conclusions about what works and what doesn’t.

What’s The Future of Gamification?

In Forbes magazine’s Global 2000 survey in 2013 – nearly 70% of the Global 2000 companies said they were going to introduce gamification to improve their marketing and customer-retention efforts.

Many companies have already used gamification to improve their offerings. One interesting example of this is Freshdesk (a helpdesk software program) which rewards its agents with badges for higher levels of performance when serving customers. It’s a near certainty that in the future more and more companies will be incorporating gamification in their business strategies.

As of 2016, venture capitalists are on record as saying they believe that gamification is the most promising aspect of the games industry. The future seems not only bright, but welcoming for design in this realm.

So, Everyone Thinks Gamification is a Great Idea, Then?

Not entirely—a few academics such as Sebastian Deterding (Hamburg University) think that gamification doesn’t really result in fun and only creates an artificial sense of achievement. These voices would stay very much in the minority by 2016; however, as gamification increases in popularity, a need may arise for further development of the concepts and mechanics of gamification in the future.

Slaying the Anti-Gamification Dragons

With gamification’s being such a new concept in the first decades of this century, you may find yourself coming up against some obstacles if you’re going to champion its cause within your company. We’ve come up with a list of some of the most popular objections to using gamification and how to overcome them.

1. Gaming is for Kids, not Business People

We can’t blame people for thinking this. After all, nearly every time you see children (outside of school), they’re playing some kind of game. **Nearly 70% of gamers are older than 18.** Teenagers and children are—in fact—the minority of gamers – not the majority.

2. But Games are For Men Only, Right?

Nope. The same ESA survey shows that just **under half of all gamers are women**. It’s also worth noting that the fastest growing segment in gaming is women over the age of 18. It’s true that first-person shooting games tend to be dominated by male players (boys will be boys, after all). However, social games such as Farmville and Candy Crush are very popular with women—and they make up the majority of users in many social games. Add to that the point that, increasingly, many of these female players will soon come of age

as having known nothing else but the digital age—and you have an ever-strengthening reason to include the fairer sex in the gamification equation.

3. Yes, but Games Aren't Work Are They?

It's easy to see game players as lazy. Any advertisement for "Wanted – Experienced Game Player" will automatically generate half-joking remarks to the tune of "I'd give my eye teeth to have that job!" or "Lucky for some; they'll probably give him a company car, too!" Particularly among those in the older generations, the stereotype of a 'game-playing specialist' persists of some acne-scarred, junk-food-addicted, rolling-out-of-bed-at-noon, disaffected youth who's been fired from every job yet attempted and doesn't even argue with his/her parents anymore, so much have they given up hope that their offspring will ever amount to anything.

Worrying about idlers loafing about on the payroll is natural enough. That's the last thing a business wants – lazy people slacking off on their time.

You can harness that dedication to solve problems at work. That's what scientists at the University of Washington did. They had spent more than 10 years working on a problem involving folding proteins to try and treat diseases (such as AIDS, Alzheimer's and cancer). They weren't progressing fast enough. So, they made a game called "FoldIt!" and allowed the public to try folding proteins online. In all, 47,000 people signed up. They cracked the problem in 10 days! Enterprises that can tap into the power of communal problem solving in a gamified way may be able to make rapid advances at a much lower cost than those that don't.

4. Work is Work and Play is Play

There's also the idea that work and play shouldn't be mixed. This is silly in this century, though one can envision how earlier generations could justify the sentiment of not fuzzing the borders and clocking in and out of their working environments dutifully and totally (even if many a business deal in the past came to pass over cocktails, etc.). In an age where "engagement" is the buzzword on the lips of every executive, surely the more fun that work is – the more people will be engaged with that work.

Gamification in Your Life Now

Fly Away and Get Rewards!

Ever used the social networking site **LinkedIn**? If you haven't, it's designed to facilitate business networking rather than friendships, which is what Facebook is more attuned to doing. LinkedIn is one of the most popular social networks in the world.

The first example of gamification you encounter on LinkedIn is "profile completeness". There's a progress indicator designed to encourage you to complete your profile. It also offers handy hints (like a tool tip in World of Warcraft) to show you what you need to do to get to 100%.

Tell the World About It!

On many websites, including the world's biggest online store, Amazon, you can leave a review of a product or service. Give stars, and if people find what you say useful – they can recommend your reviews in turn. You can even review a review. This introduces an element of friendly competition as people seek to become trusted reviewers, well-liked by their community.

Gamification has emerged as a powerful design discipline. It involves taking elements of games and working them into settings where games aren't traditionally required or where they might have been deemed inappropriate in earlier times. In doing so, you can inject fun and keener attention from your target audience into the user experience. While the discipline would be a new feature in design in the mid-2010s,

it was also quick to become established very quickly in many aspects of our lives. We're gamers by nature; therefore, this is perfectly natural.

How to Clarify Your Expectations of Gamification Projects

What do You Need from Gamification?

Gamification, the process of incorporating aspects of games into more mundane tasks, is an exciting field. In fact, it's so exciting that people's expectations of the gamification process can become unreasonable or unrealistic.

As of the mid-2010s, many people in business would remain skeptical of what gamification can add in terms of business value. So, if you're championing gamification in your organization, you want to make sure you don't promise more than you can deliver. Always apply design thinking to your gamification efforts.

You're Not Designing a Game

It's important to note that gamification is about taking some aspects of gaming and applying them to a task to make it more fun. The objective is not to turn the task into a game completely. In fact, **the trick to successful gaming is, very often, to keep things simple**. Likewise, you should keep the introduction of elements of gamification to a subtle level; that way, the fun comes through without the user's recognising the point that any sort of game's going on.

LinkedIn uses a progress bar to drive users to complete their profiles. This is a simple thing to implement. It's unlikely that making a progress bar dependent on completing increasingly tough levels of a shoot 'em up game would be as effective. Why?—because users enter into using a social media platform in a different way from how they would a game that calls for blasting most things that appear in the player's field of view into oblivion.

You need a clear objective for any gamification exercise, and you should be looking to achieve that objective as simply as possible. Keep the purpose of your design's use firmly in mind.

It's Not Easy to Get Gamification Right

Don't let that discourage you, but be mindful of the point that game play in this context is anything but child's play. You can't just reach into a bag of random game mechanics and bolt them onto your enterprise applications if you want your gamification efforts to succeed. There's a place for points, badges and leaderboards, but it's not everywhere. You need to choose the right tool for the right job, and sometimes this will require some trial and error. That means knowing your target audience inside out, testing your design time and again before rolling it out, and never losing sight of the point that you're playing another game with higher stakes in the process—producing the best design you can without risking its—and your—reputation.

Bad or poorly received gamification features may indeed deter your users from getting involved with the task in hand. **Your objective is to engage users, not put them off**. For instance, LinkedIn has a decidedly professional look and nature. With a little visualizing, you can picture potential users as being business executives, looking up each other so as to gain an in-depth understanding of who each is and what each person can do. It would be the last place for you to introduce a glitzily-looking element. It's not that these people are deadly serious all the time and detest leisure; it's just that there's a time and place for everything—and, regardless of the point that attitudes towards gamification pivot on the generation gap, businesspeople will likely remain serious-minded for millennia to come. So, remember whom you're designing for. To keep testing features before releasing them can help with this, but a real measurement of success normally requires input from the entire user base.

Don't Treat Your Users as Toys

It can be tempting to see gamification as a means to introduce additional layers of control in the workplace or to try and fool people into doing more than they are expected to. That's a bad idea. First and foremost, it's unethical, even if one might argue that seeing who can puppeteer their users for the most profit could itself be boasted as a game at private cocktail parties. Still, apart from the rights and wrongs of 'persuading'/'conning' people into doing things, users will work out quickly when they're being manipulated or forced into things, anyway. Then, they'll tend to withdraw from the game environment, and the offending design will become known as, say, a Skinneresque rat maze or the front lines on a chess board. Not only do people tend to dislike being viewed as rats or pawns, but they can also make their displeasure with a design like that known in a very public way.

It's important to take an ethical approach to gamification and imagine yourself on the receiving end of whatever you're creating. As a line in the song "If Only" by The Calling accurately proclaims: "We can't mislead to make things right." So, at the same time as you're reminding yourself exactly who will use your design, remember, too, that they're not stupid. Particularly when you've got a user base of adults who can discuss your design amongst themselves—and tell the rest of the world about it—the last thing you want to do is to try to outsmart them in this way. Once a user feels patronised, used and tricked, it may be only a matter of time before the first reviews appear. Therefore, if your design respects their intelligence, it will stand a better chance of winning their loyalty and, dare we hope, even more users.

Gamification Will Not Fix Bad Process or Business Models

A poorly designed process doesn't become a well-designed process because you add some achievement badges. Similarly, a lousy business model remains a lousy business model no matter how you dress it up – as they say in England, "A pig in a dress is still a pig."

Game mechanics can enhance good ideas and good processes and help increase adoption and engagement of new processes. But don't try and use gamification as a Band Aid for a lousy idea – it won't work. As you can see, gamification can be very useful in the enterprise context, but it is not a magical cure all for an organization's ills either.

Learning from Games

A Second Working Life?

Wouldn't it be fantastic if work was just like your favourite game? Would it even feel like work at that point? There a lot of positive attributes found in games that, with a little know-how, any self-respecting designer could easily incorporate into the work environment. Sure, you may never get to slay an Orc at your desk, but work can be a lot more fun... with a little thought.

Let's take a look at some of the aspects of gaming that you might easily work into the workplace of your users.

Tasks

Have you noticed that in many games the tasks you do are really, really repetitive, but they're still fun? In the workplace, repetitive tasks quickly become very, very dull instead. Much of that has to do with the fact that most people tend to enter the workplace with a 'work' mind-set. That is, "Oh, here we go; another eight hours of this rubbish. Well, let's get it over with..." is the sort of resigned statement a worker might make to himself. A little gamification could go a long way to turning that around.

Feedback

One of the most common complaints in the workplace is that feedback comes rarely if at all. Even annual reviews have a habit of being pushed down the priority lists. That means many staff members get demotivated, and the ones who dread feedback might even forget what to dread and keep messing up, unabated. **Games give people constant feedback**, and they love it.

Goals and Objectives

Tune into World of Warcraft and you'll be told something like this: "Your mission is to kill 10 goblins and collect the leader's sack of gold." Clear and specific objectives are essential in many games. Yet, **at work, goals and objectives are often murky and difficult to define** – this is something that should be simple to overcome without the need for any programming at all. It takes insight and an understanding that each worker's role encapsulates means and ends in a set of functions.

The Path to Mastery

Getting good at a game is simple—complete this task, then move on to the next one, and eventually your level goes up. Most people can't say the same about work, but—once again—**this path could be clearly defined in many roles with just a little forethought**. For example, just think, what does an administrator need to do in order to become a senior administrator? Assuming we're dealing with an ethical working environment (i.e., one where flattery and nepotism get you nowhere), then we're talking about upping people's games.

Rules

Rules in games tend to be explicit, and rules at work are often unspoken and a result of personal preference from managers and the culture as a whole. We're not just talking about job descriptions here—we mean the complete tableau of what a typical worker has to deal with in his or her work environment. **Learning to state rules would make the world of work simpler and easier to navigate**. It might also help rectify a questionable situation in the way of office politics.

Information

Games tell you what you need to know as soon as you need to know it—as for, managers... well, not so much. Information delivery at work is often insufficient or delivered at the wrong time. This is the difference, for example, between checking a status screen in a game at a glance to see what your health points are like, or what you're packing in your inventory, and a manager running an end-of-month report and then calling an emergency meeting. A little gamification of information delivery systems could make working life much easier. Knowing as you're going makes far better sense than getting a shock after so many days of things not going right, complete with the knock-on effects of these problems.

Failure

Epic fail! It's the war cry of a billion gamers. When you get it wrong in a game, you laugh about it; if you get it spectacularly wrong, you boast about it. You share your failure with your peers, and they help you learn to do it better next time. The work environment, on the other hand, tends to punish failure—and thus people don't talk about it. A gamified attitude to failure could enable rapid learning on the job. It could also cheer up a downbeat culture. What decides how well the workforce in question reacts to it is how well it receives their errors and avoids humiliating them.

Status of Users

Everyone in an MMO (massive multiplayer online) game knows everything about another player (or, more precisely, folks can do this if they want to) with a click of a button. Transparency makes it easy to decide your place in the pecking order. It's much harder in the office to determine this. Yet, if statuses were advertised and in the right way, the work environment would be much nicer and less complicated. What does that mean for you as a designer? It means devising a healthy, light-hearted system that encourages players in the workplace to play well. It also means never losing sight of the fact that workers are people and people are sensitive to being shown up in front of their peers.

Promotion

Folks know what they have to do to get promoted to the next level in a game; why doesn't work make things that simple, too? Here again, the working culture tends to muddy the waters. Yes, the workplace should be a meritocracy, and in an ideal world it is. The most effective businesses are, after all, those where those involved leave their egos at home.

Collaboration

In multiplayer games, collaboration is a given. Yet, in the workplace, collaboration isn't always something you can rely on. Politics get in the way, for example. In a multiplayer game, X won't worry that Y and Z are the best of friends. At work, if Y and Z are in the boss's favour and X isn't, one of two things may happen. X may either work that much harder to get in with the boss or, feeling demotivated from the get-go and resenting the political structure of his environment, X may sabotage the collaboration by not contributing as much.

Speed/Risk

Games encourage you to work fast, take risks, and become better and better quickly. Work does the opposite, and that can hinder the company's ability to compete in a global marketplace. Although the principle is simple, this can be tricky territory to design around. For example, typically, in a non-salaried role, a team member might just be working diligently and thoroughly—or he might be goldbricking by padding out the task. Which is it? Here, we have to know what risks are pertinent to the industry involved in that workplace.

Autonomy

When you play a game – you're in charge. At work, many people suffer from micro-management and endless inane direction. Which would you prefer—being the master of your own destiny or a choreographed drone?

Narrative

There's almost always a story with a game. It makes it easy for people to understand why they are there and what they're doing. Only the best companies are smart enough to provide a similar narrative for their employees. Those that don't risk having a reluctant group clocking in as if it was another day down in the coal mine.

Obstacles

A game is fun because there are challenges. This runs in the same vein as the point that a good story is fun because there is conflict. Game designers deliberately put obstacles in players' paths, and they expect them to work out how to get around these. Facing these setbacks is part and parcel of the player's overall satisfaction in a game, be they complicated strategy-based obstacles or just plain hard-to-kill enemies. Few players buy a game and access the cheat codes on the same day.

Obstacles at work, however, often crop up accidentally. Rather than being fun, they can be sources of aggravation or demotivation, especially if the working culture has an uneven—and unfair—distribution of responsibilities and pressures, and if it values blame for failure more than dealing with problems in a rational way, regardless of whoever might lose face in the process. Moreover, people lack the authority to overcome many of these obstacles themselves. From there, sentiments such as "It's not my job to worry about that, anyway" don't take long to develop. The result?—an obstacle blocks progress for far longer than it should and can end up costing painfully. Is it time for a change?

What makes a Game Fun

The Four Basic Principles of Fun in a Game: Goals, Rules, Feedback, Voluntary Participation

Goals

Every game needs an objective. Goals give a game a sense of purpose and enable us to feel pleased when we succeed – an essential component of fun. Achieving them empowers us with a feeling of accomplishment, while giving closure to the story of the challenge we accepted while playing the game. If we want to go back and play again, that says something extra about the game design—it was so much fun

and/or had so much atmosphere that we'll overlook the point we're repeating ourselves and enjoy the great replay value.

Rules

Rules restrict the means to achieving our goals. They help us become creative in the way that we play a game, and creativity makes a game fun. They also keep gameplay in proportion and enhance the appreciation of the reality you've entered by agreeing to play.

The old proverb says, "There is an exception to every rule." That's not always true in games.

Feedback

We also need to know how well we're doing within the context of the rules and the goals. Cranking up the sophistication level a bit, we see that Candy Crush—on the other hand—offers feedback in the way of in-level scores, a leaderboard, a chance to check on the progress of your friends, and so on. It's this feedback that motivates people to play hundreds and hundreds of levels of Candy Crush and have fun while doing so.

Voluntary Participation

It's no fun if you're made to do something. That's work. Games are fun because we choose to play together, we choose to agree to the goals and rules and because we enjoy the feedback from our choices. That said, if you can make your design so enticing that a player can't stay away from it because it's so fun, paradoxically, he'll be compelling himself to play it. That's the signature of a great design, and it's something that we will address in more detail elsewhere—the addiction factor.

In summary, to make a game fun you have to touch on each of the four criteria listed here, and the same is true for your gamification projects.

Obstacles and Their Importance in Games

Obstacles are a huge part of what makes games fun. They add challenge to the game – without them, a game would simply be carrying out a monotonous task (imagine playing football with no opponents and unlimited chances on goal – you might score a million goals, but it would rapidly cease to be any fun at all).

Of course, you'll want to consider the way that you introduce obstacles very carefully; while there are masochists in the gaming community who love insanely hard challenges – gamification exercises tend to be aimed at a wider audience with less love for frustration. Here again, consider what a target audience might want in particular, and—remember—you want to translate gamification into an existing system, not serve up a game in itself.

Emotional Rewards

Gamification can make a huge impact in the workplace—if you want it to. One of the key reasons that gamification can achieve this is that it can confer emotional rewards on the player. That is, by having fun—you can create positive feelings for someone. This begins with an understanding that the opposite of play is not work; it's depression.

If you can tap into people's emotions and encourage them to feel happier, you can conduct better gamification projects.

What's the Opposite of Play?

If your answer to that question is "work", then you aren't alone in believing that. After all, from an early age we've shown the difference between being at work and being at play.

A general consensus tends to maintain that depression is essentially a combination of two issues. The first is a sense of inadequacy about which we feel pessimistic. The second is a despondent lack of activity.

Depression is a negative (and in some cases a cripplingly, even fatally, negative) emotional state. When we're depressed, everything seems so much harder than it should be. We find it hard to be around others, and we find it hard to do or even observe things.

Feeling depressed is the opposite of what we feel when we are at play; everything is much harder when we are depressed; however, when we are at play, it's easier.

If play is the opposite of depression, it should stand to reason that we can reverse those two issues and come up with a formula for play instead. That formula should be the recipe for a positive emotional state (even an emotional 'high' perhaps).

So, the first trait of play would be an enthusiastic belief in our own capabilities, and the second would be an incredible and enjoyable flurry of activity.

Do Games Do That?

We think that they do. Take a simple game such as Farmville, one of the world's most popular social networking games; many people have played it for hours on end. They know they can succeed in the game (and every single player does succeed in Farmville – there's no way to "lose") and that fulfils the "enthusiastic belief on our capabilities" part of the recipe.

Then, there's the "incredible and enjoyable flurry of activity" – helping your friends make their farms perfect leads to a lot of time in the game world. It also leads to the strengthening—at least in this sense—of a lot of bonds between people, be they work colleagues or loose acquaintances.

Contrary to popular belief, the opposite of play is depression and not work. If work actually happens to equal depression for someone, finding another job would be helpful. Games and aspects of play are a basic fundamental human need; while they are not a miracle cure for depression, they do provide a highly positive influence in our lives. This is a key selling point for gamification exercises within non-game environments; by reducing the 'depression' often associated with work, working can be a healthier and more positive exercise.

Work in Games

High stakes work (risky behaviour - shooting games, races)

Busywork (endless iteration of the same task, games that keep our hands full and our attention grabbed even though the work involved is not productive or particularly unique. We do it because it's better than doing nothing)

Mental work (games that engage our grey matter. Most people get a certain thrill when they outsmart an opponent)

Physical work

Exploration work (Discovering new things is cool. We enjoy finding out about things we didn't know about before.)

Creative work (Making our own decisions and jumping outside of boundaries is also fun)

Strange as it may sound, games involve work. It's just work that we enjoy doing rather than work we resent doing. We've all found ourselves wishing that we could get out of work early on a Friday, but many of us, if given that time, will then throw ourselves happily into a different type of work as we play games. One difference may well be that the 'game work' is self-imposed, whereas 'work work' feels more enforced. Another difference may be that three hours of game work in our own time seems to evaporate quickly, while the same chunk of time stuck in an office, buried in work someone else has picked out for us to do, on a dreary Monday morning can drag slower than an aircraft carrier's anchor on the sea bed.

These are important considerations for you as you dabble and become proficient in gamification design. Good gamification projects will help work feel less like work and more like fun, while still retaining all the work that needs to be done.

Pride

Pride may be a Biblical sin, but pride in our work and play is something that makes us human and brings us a sense of achievement. If you can tap into that sense of pride (also known as 'fiero') within gamification of a system, you have a stronger chance of achieving the objectives of your gamification project. The hard science involved in your users' neurotransmitters as they achieve natural highs links to the pride you want them to feel. From there, they'll want to keep feeling proud of themselves, come rain or shine, whether at work or at play (and if you do it really well, you might just blur the borders between those two).

Of course it's important to instill pride in moderation. After all, as Baruch Spinoza the Dutch philosopher said, "Pride is pleasure arising from a man's thinking too highly of himself."

Happiness in Gaming

There is no higher objective than making someone happy; games make us happy when they tick all the right boxes to be good games. A game can have a seemingly endless arsenal of features, but if the designer hasn't worked in the magic formula, he'll be in for an epic user fail.

Casting our minds back to our childhoods is like conjuring a powerful ally here. For those of us of a certain vintage, this includes the privilege of having been of age to have witnessed and savoured the fledgling years of home computing, when programmers managed to engineer happiness using comparatively nonexistent resources. That said, the principle holds regardless of era. Being in touch with this dynamic of happiness—and your inner child in this respect—will serve you well. If you can create happiness either in games or in gamification – you can tap into what users/players really want and deliver high value products that keep people engaged.

Player Centered Design



Player-centred design is an extension of the idea of user-centred design. It applies uniquely to gamification design within systems which traditionally do not contain game elements. It looks at the users and asks the key question, "Do they want to use this in the first instance?". It allows you to adapt gamification to the needs of your users and ensure that the results of the exercise support the business reasons for gamification. If you can weave player-centred design into the exact context of your audience's organisation, you will travel a long way in starting to deliver a piece that not only gets results but one that also is popular.

Player-centred design, like user centred design is an iterative process. You develop something, try it with players, and then amend it until players really appreciate a specific feature. **Monitoring, measuring and managing (the 3 'm')** are a key part of the framework.

The final part of player-centred design is balancing legal and ethical considerations and business requirements with keeping the whole thing fun. Gamification needs to meet all those requirements in order for you to make a success of the process via what end result you present to your end user.

User-centred design uses the yardsticks of efficiency, effectiveness and satisfaction to evaluate designs. **Player-centred design adds engagement to this list.** While user-centred design asks the question, “Can the user use the product efficiently, effectively and satisfactorily?”, player-centred design asks, “Do they want to use it in the first place?”.

There are 3 M's for gamification we use in order to evaluate the performance of our gamification designs: managing the mission (i.e., checking on the performance of the gamified elements), monitoring the motivation (i.e., ensuring that players engage well with the gamified elements) and measuring the metric (i.e., measuring to find out if the gamified elements meaningfully impact business objectives). Taken together and in that sequence, they can enable your gamification design not just to survive its ultimate field test but also to improve and refine to the point that you have a winning product whose elements you can plug into future efforts.

We design enterprise-level gamification exercises to meet business needs. These exercises also need to take into account the impact of privacy and workers' rights legislation (something game designers do not need to examine), the ethical impact of the gamified approach, and that the exercises need to remain fun despite the enterprise-level context. The earlier these ideas feature in the design phase, the easier you will find them to accommodate in the final design.

It's all About the Player

Gamification is supposed to engage, motivate and delight an audience, and encourage them to do something more or better than they would have done in the past. When you build your gamification strategy upon understanding your players, the chances of getting something right are much higher than when you build a product based upon users.

The word “player” has a very explicit implication when compared to “user”. **Users, in a corporate context, have no choice about participating in an activity** – think of a call-centre agent using a customer relationship management system. Players, on the other hand, are supposed to have the choice to become involved—and it is that choice that enables them to have fun. As a designer, always ensure you base any gamification project **upon the idea of “choice” rather than obligation**.

The deeper the understanding you have about your players, the better you'll be able to visualize their wants, dreams, needs, etc. from your gamification process. In the beginning, you may have an idea of who they might be; however, the true nature of your ‘playership’ will be enigmatic—a problem for you to address.

In order to know a player deep down, we can use a specific tool used within gamification environments known as the **Player Persona**. This is a fictional but archetypal player profile that demonstrates the perceived characteristics, needs and behaviours of the target player.

The idea is to:

- Focus on the way the team's imaginative process develops around the player. It also prevents design creep for the “elastic player”. This happens when you add more features and functions throughout the project and end up with a confusing end-product due to a de-structured approach.

- Enable effective prioritization within the team by ensuring that priorities remain with the player and not the team's needs.
- Create empathy throughout the design team for the player, and humanize the player's needs. It's very useful to be able to keep that in mind in order to ensure you'll have results players will appreciate.

The player persona, in the context of business software, will examine a range of factors including:

- The individual's personal business objectives
- The individual's experience within the business
- The individual's aspirations in his/her role and career
- Demographics such as age, gender, education, etc.

Demographic data is useful in gamification because it allows us to build a more detailed player persona. Essentially, a player persona is a detailed representation of a group of users displaying similar characteristics. It allows the design and development team to focus on the players' needs from the system rather than technological or data requirements.

Gender:

Studies have shown that men tend to prefer competitive game environments whereas women tend to prefer social, cooperative environments. If you have a target gender in mind when you begin the gamification process, it's easier to deliver a product that they will appreciate. Having these differences in mind is vital, particularly as gender has for a long time been a potential source of hazard in game (and gamification) design.

Age:

Those from Generation X—those born between the early 1960s and early 1980s—tend to be very much hierarchy-oriented and are somewhat intolerant of failure.

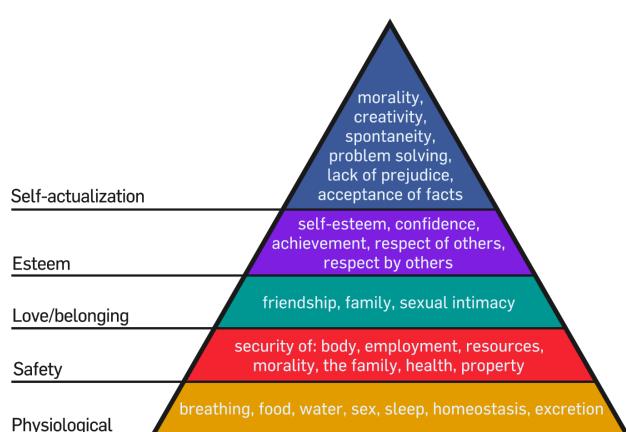
Generation Y, in contrast—those born between the early 1980s and 2000s—grew up playing video games and had them on tap at home. They're used to immediate feedback. They enjoy risks and the “epic fail”. They've probably spent close to 10,000+ hours playing games. They know exactly what they like in a game.

Level of education:

An audience of postgraduates is going to have very different needs in terms of challenge and information from a game as compared to a group of high-school dropouts.

Gamification needs to support the specific goals of the individuals within the organization using the system as opposed to assumed generic goals related to job roles.

Maslow's pyramid of needs can help you explore what your audience really needs in their work and from gamification.



Interviews and surveys can help you obtain this information; still, it may take a highly skilled researcher to discover the real requirements of the business and the players. You could consider offering the players a list of potential features and ask them to rank these features in order of importance.

The more professional data that you can collect as related to your users, the better you will be able to cater to them, and that's a key aspect of player-centred design for gamification projects.

There are no rights and wrongs when it comes to **work culture**, but even within an organization widely varying extremes can be present. Appearances can deceive, but they can also inform and impart vast amounts of information about what's going on behind the desks in a concourse.

You don't want to introduce a leaderboard into a collaborative environment—because it may distract from the fun rather than enhance it. On the other hand, social sharing schemes may not suit the highly competitive player.

A work culture may be highly structured with strict rules and regulations as to how work should be undertaken. In other places, and this is often true of startup cultures, things may be much more ad hoc.

Bartle's Player Type



The Persona Template for Gamification

The form is titled "Player Name" and includes the following sections:

- status update:** Placeholder for a status update.
- friends:** Icons for three friends: a green circle, a red circle, and a blue circle.
- groups:** Icons for three groups: a yellow star with "PL", a green leaf, and a red book with "Digital Innovation".
- interests:** Icons for three interests: a red high-heeled shoe, a blue tennis racket, and a green musical instrument.
- Player Name:** Fields for gender, birthday, relationship status, job title, industry, job goals, pain points, aspirations, and work culture.
- work culture:** A horizontal slider scale with markers for "formal", "informal", "competitive", "cooperative", "structured", "unstructured", "individual achievement", and "group achievement".
- Bartle's player type:** Buttons for "achiever" (orange), "explorer" (green), "socializer" (blue), and "killer" (pink).

The Mission Possible

“Begin with the end in mind.” and “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”

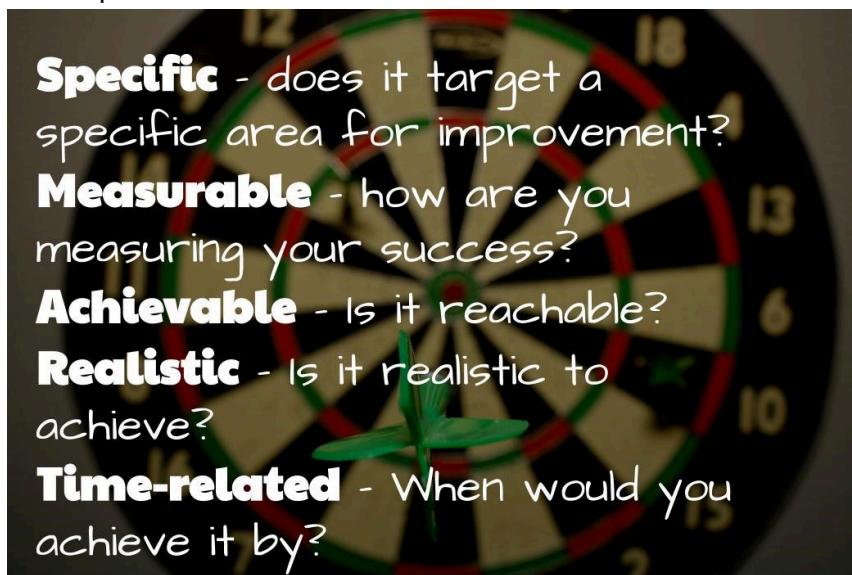
The true mission of gamification is to achieve a business objective. That objective can be anything from educating a new member of staff, to winning customers, or to making a task less repetitive. The mission isn’t important from this perspective. What is important is that you can understand and articulate that mission.

If you can’t **explain the mission simply and easily**, then it’s unlikely that your gamification exercise will succeed. If you aren’t clear about what you want to achieve, how will you know when you have achieved it?

Before you start to solve a problem, **it’s a good idea to develop an understanding as to whether there really is a problem**, and whether any proposed solution is likely to solve it. It’s all too common in business for a manager to say, “My staff aren’t performing – they need training on XYZ.” Yet, when you visit their department to see things for yourself, you may in fact find that management within the department is weak and the processes are overly complicated. In such a situation, any staff member performance would be something of a miracle, and no amount of training would be likely to achieve the desired objective.

For a solution to a problem to be truly effective, **it also has to please the person sponsoring the solution**. It’s all too common for well-meaning thinkers to hurl solutions at a problem that solve the initial issue, but cause huge knock-on issues throughout a department or business unit. In some cases, the ‘solution’ will cause even more damage in the long term than the problem would have alone, had it been left to fester.

Develop a **SMART** Mission:



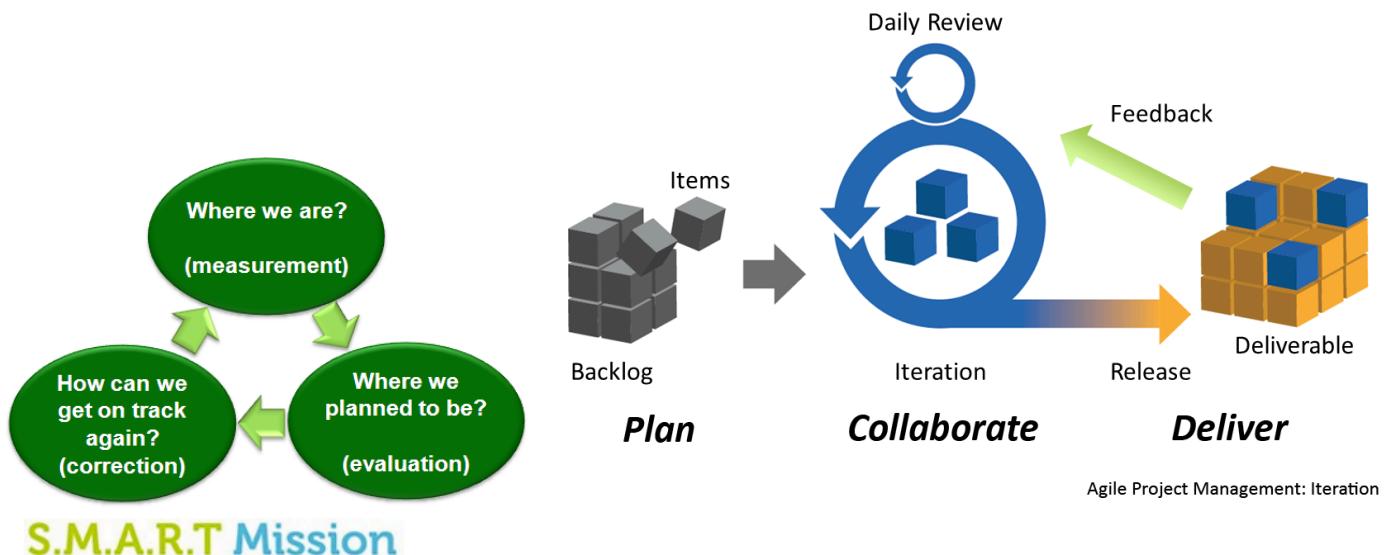
- Specific** - does it target a specific area for improvement?
- Measurable** - how are you measuring your success?
- Achievable** - Is it reachable?
- Realistic** - Is it realistic to achieve?
- Time-related** - When would you achieve it by?

A SMART mission enables you to communicate to the gamification team not just what needs to be addressed through the project but also how you will be able to demonstrate success at the end of the project. The SMART goal-setting system is a remarkably effective tool that can help you define and fine-tune the real solution. It lets you remove all the obstacles that would otherwise lead to your arriving at false solutions.

If you understand what the situation is and what situation is required, it should be easy to build a SMART mission which promotes the success of your gamification exercise.

Gamification projects aren't just about players; we also use them to achieve business results. Your gamification design team must research exactly what the business expects and ensure that everyone involved in the project focusses on these expectations throughout the design process. The idea is to create engagement with players that achieves results and return on investment. Getting the balance between fun engagement and serious results will pay off time and again for you as you progress to later gamification works in your career.

Gamification mission:



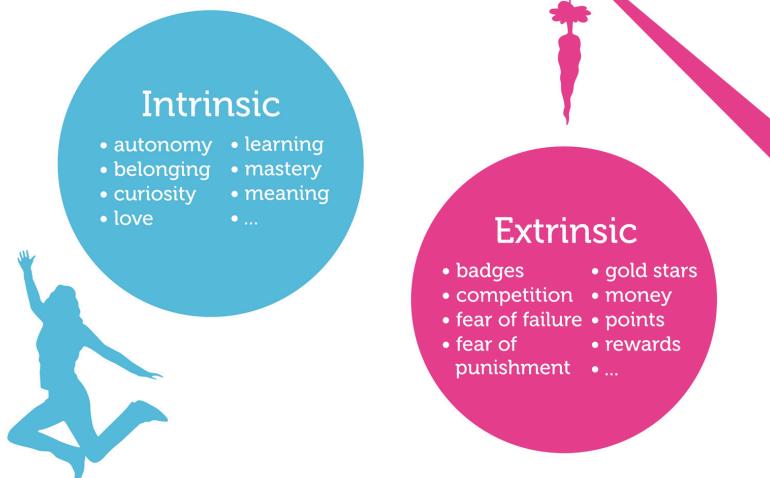
S.M.A.R.T Mission



Motivating Your Players

Platinum Rule—“Do unto others what they want done to them”

Types of Motivators



The role of reciprocity

Reciprocal services	Non-reciprocal services
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require permission from both participants. Foster relationship. 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow you to follow someone without them following you back. Foster discovery. 

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You can use motivational drivers within gamification to help engage players. Common drivers include collecting stuff, connecting with a wider world, achieving things, a need for feedback, self-expression, reciprocity, and blissful productivity. It's worth noting that the ideal state achieved by players is one of "flow" in which what they are doing is challenging and interesting. If your design lacks this on one extreme, players will find it boring and not so challenging to the point that it becomes overwhelming. If you overdo the challenging part, players will switch off after failing to make it past the same early level time and again.

Game Mechanics - Reasons to Play



"Game mechanics are the core of what a game truly is. They are the interactions that remain when all of the aesthetics, technology and story are stripped away."



Points are a simple way of measuring progress in gamification. They are “single count metrics”. They are a means for the system to generate metrics to indicate player engagement and actions. They can be used as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for reporting on the overall acceptance and integration within corporate life of your gamification project.

Badges are easy to create within a gamification project. They’re a virtual reward for collecting enough points or repeating a certain action often enough. They reinforce behaviour and act as a “virtual pat on the back” for the player. They address the motivational drivers of collecting stuff and achieving things.

Leaderboards are simply a summary of the points and badges collected by all the players within the game. For the competitive soul, leaderboards are a vital part of gaming. It’s worth noting, however, that although leaderboards do need some careful thought, even with the best of your design efforts, they still can deter a new player if that person gets ranked against long-established players. How will he ever catch up with the guy who has already played the game for five years, and has a zillion points? ‘Morale’ needs to be your watchword here.

Peer pressure has a substantial effect on what we do, even when the relationship is a virtual one. She found that a trusted person within someone’s personal network has more impact on someone’s day-to-day choices than the media does.

Constraints are devices we use in gamification in order to add challenge and, if we do it in just the right manner, we can create “**urgent optimism**” through them and inspire a player to get really stuck in and create and produce via gamified features. They add spice to the experience and the race to achieve a goal that would otherwise not happen if a player had all the time in the world. However, it’s also important to ensure that you do this with an eye on what is possible and what is not. If you push players too hard using constraints, they’ll abandon their efforts rather than see them through.

The player journey is something you need to handle with care as part of the gamification design process. Players need to be welcomed and guided into the journey (onboarding) so they feel confident to progress. They need a little support (scaffolding) and nurturing as they move forward, regardless of how far they have to go. It can help to give your players some indication of the **progress** they have made, too. Remember, they will get frustrated if they don’t feel they’re getting anywhere, so break the challenges you present them gently and with due guidance. Taking care of the journey will help the player feel comfortable and confident to undertake that journey.

Storytelling can add depth and emotional connections to gamified features within a system. You do not need to be a natural storyteller or to write a novel so as to incorporate storytelling into your gamification design. It’s always about creating something valuable for the player that helps you achieve your gamification mission. Emotional design also plays a role in gamification, and aesthetics assist in creating positive emotions. Don’t neglect graphic design as a part of this process. Your players are going to ‘inhabit’ the world you build for them, so build an atmosphere they’ll enjoy, and always try to make them smile. Those are the signatures of a successful gamification experience.

The game plan brings together the game economy, the rules of the game, and engagement loops in order to deliver a high-level plan for your gamification efforts. Game currencies may include virtual currencies (like Bitcoin), but also consider fun, self-esteem and social capital for your projects. Above all, the element of choice is vital in driving a player’s experience in this context. Any plan you make can (and usually will) change over time. You should therefore treat it as a ‘living’ rather than a ‘static’ document. When you have completed your game plan, you will usually be ready to begin the design process in full. That’s where the real fun begins, built on this solid foundation you will have provided for it.

Getting it Right - Managing, Monitoring and Measuring

The Hawthorne Effect is simple. The idea is that if you pay attention to people's work and tell them it involves a productivity gain, you will get a productivity gain, but only for a very short period of time. When you take your attention away from the individuals in question, they will very quickly return to the way they worked before. In other words, whatever the 'cause' is, it is only ever as good as a glorified placebo.

In order for gamification to deliver value over and above the Hawthorne Effect, it needs to offer lasting benefits to the business. It's not a "use once and then abandon" process, but rather an iterative process that requires both long-term commitment and long-term results if those who behold any work you do are to consider it successful.

A key area for creating sustainable gamification projects is play-testing. Play-testing is a type of user acceptance test. It involves observing players whilst they are interacting with the gamified system in order to detect areas for improvement, possible bugs or flaws, and to help in iterating a better product. You need to develop a play-testing plan which will run throughout the design and development process prior to a rollout.

There are also three other aspects to consider for sustainable gamification: managing the mission, monitoring player motivation and measuring the effectiveness of game mechanics. You will need to undertake these necessary follow-up tasks after the launch of any gamification project.

Sustainability means sustained benefits, and these benefits in gamification are important to the business because they represent a higher return on investment. The more you can demonstrate long-lasting benefits, the happier your sponsors will be.



Player fatigue is the process where players slowly become bored of a game and drop out of it. Your gamification strategy won't be as complex as World of Warcraft, but you need to pay as much attention during each phase of play in order to try to keep your players interested and prevent them from becoming fatigued.

If you understand the cycle of the players' interest, you can work on sustaining their interest for as long as possible so as to keep them engaged with your project (and producing ROI) for the maximum length of time.

The Law and Ethics of Gamification

Nudging: An attempt to persuade a player into doing something good

The Cores of Values and Ethics

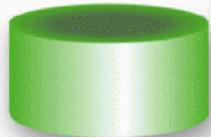
Patterns of the Whole
Sense of collective individualism
To serve the entire living system



Holistic/Experiential

Existential/Systemic

Relative Needs of the Collective
Fit in with group's norms & attitudes
Best serve the people's common good

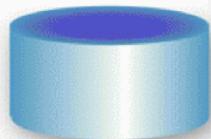


Integrated Processes & Flows
To align conflicting alternatives
Personal responsibilities in being

Sociocentric/Humanistic

Multiplistic/Rational

Commandments of Higher Authority
Comply with rules, avoid punishment
Duty (with guilt) to do what is right



Situational Rules of the Game
Individual principles of conscience
Autonomy and self control to win

Egocentric/Exploitative

Ways of the Tribe
Animistic beliefs & mystical signs
Serve the clan & ancestral ways



Absolutistic/Moralistic

Law of the Jungle
Impulsive drives & immediate rewards
Guiltless service of raw self-interest

Tribalistic/Animistic