

# **Real Life Gamification**

Practical guide for ambitious leaders

Dariusz Tarczyński, 2022

Just airing my thoughts...

# CONTENTS

CONTENTS.....	3
Introduction.....	9
Gamification vs Motivation .....	10
Why I decided to write this book.....	11
Practical promises of gamification .....	16
Chapter 1. The fascinating boom.....	20
A glimpse into the recent history of gaming.....	21
Casual games / casual interaction.....	26
Engineered Customer Experience.....	28
Spending money on Entertainment .....	31
Socio-economic trends supporting Gamification.....	33
Chapter 2. The Octalysis framework by Yu-kai Chou.....	38
1. Epic Meaning & Calling .....	40
2. Development & Accomplishment.....	41
3. Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback .....	41
4. Ownership & Possession .....	42
5. Social Influence & Relatedness.....	42
6. Unpredictability & Curiosity .....	42
7. Scarcity & Impatience .....	43
8. Loss & Avoidance .....	43
Final word on Octalysis Framework .....	44
Chapter 3. Good mood goes first.....	45
The often-missed preliminary step .....	46

Invitation to play .....	46
Show how others play .....	47
Define the end game scenario .....	48
Chapter 3. Reward system .....	49
The fundamental strength of rewards.....	50
Habit formation.....	54
Case study: Sprint to finish the book .....	55
Rewards vs pain avoidance .....	57
Case study: The wall of personal goals .....	60
Key elements of a good reward system in gamification	61
Case study: The issue of trust vs system abuse.....	67
Types of rewards .....	68
Rewards in gamification .....	70
1. Personal achievement.....	71
2. Competition and Recognition .....	71
3. Setting multiple goals at once .....	73
4. Physical reward / prize (optional) .....	75
Case study: No-Coin August .....	78
5. Time-based reward .....	79
6. Higher means.....	80
7. Surprise .....	80
Case study: Support for Ukraine .....	81
8. Random rewards.....	82
Case study: Special monthly prize .....	83

Chapter 4. Leaderboards .....	85
“Leaderboards are like mirror” .....	86
The good transparency .....	89
Practical example of a universal leaderboard .....	90
Case study: Who is picking up the trash? .....	92
Personal Leaderboards .....	93
Case study: Evolution of personal gamification system to write a book .....	95
Case study: The Super Player .....	98
Chapter 5. Our brain is lazy .....	100
Our brain is lazy .....	101
“Linchpin: Are you indispensable” book by Seth Godin .....	105
Awareness gives advantage .....	106
Practical example .....	109
Chapter 6. The game of leadership .....	113
We have an issue .....	114
Remote leadership .....	116
Gamification can set standards that managers will follow .....	117
Games are getting more important than ever .....	119
The massive importance of showing the right path ....	120
Case study: “The Growth Club” .....	122
Chapter 7. Rules instead of orders .....	123
Why not orders? .....	124

Why rules are better.....	125
Why does this book state that rules are better than orders? .....	126
Real-life examples of using gamification rules.....	127
Case study: “Blink twice if gamification made you do it!” .....	130
Should we inspire or observe? .....	131
Motivation is not enough .....	132
Observation drives action.....	133
“ <i>Atomic Habits</i> ” book by James Clear .....	134
Chapter 8. Personal gamification.....	135
Introduction.....	136
“How to succeed in life without effort?” .....	136
Case study: A project not possible to fail.....	140
Freedom of self-authoring .....	141
Chapter 9. In-play gamification tips.....	147
Gamification is experimental .....	148
Points balance / rebalance .....	148
Progress tracking frequency.....	149
Reward system updates.....	150
Gameplay rebalance / limits .....	151
Introduce limited offers.....	151
Player personalization, avatars, badges.....	152
Bigger reason .....	152
Chapter 10. Summary.....	154

Key elements of gamification system .....	156
Key elements of reward system .....	157
Key elements of human motivation .....	158
Key elements of personal gamification.....	159
Why it is worth using leaderboards.....	160
How can leaders leverage on gamification? .....	161
Chapter 11. Tools I personally use for Gamification.....	162
Whiteboard .....	163
Spreadsheet .....	164
Task managers .....	165
OGAMIFY .....	166
Counter apps .....	175
GamiEngine & GamiStream .....	176
Chapter 12. Source of inspiration. Apps that gamify. ..	178
Duolingo.....	179
Chapter 13. OGAMIFY Practical tips .....	185
Introduction .....	186
1. Start with basic tasks .....	188
2. Setup the store.....	190
3. Monthly celebration .....	192
4. Find a gamemaster .....	192
5. Handle system abuse.....	193
6. Promote healthy habits .....	194
7. Promote focus.....	196

8. Leverage badges .....	197
9. Introduce challenges .....	200
10. Empower self-reflection.....	201
11. Boost social media .....	202
12. Inject strategic goals .....	204
Final words .....	207
Bibliography.....	210



# **Introduction**

# Gamification vs Motivation

“Get Motivated” is a famous movement grouping together millions of people across multiple channels. Only on the Reddit platform, it counts almost 19 million members so far and growing<sup>1</sup>.

I don't think that “getting motivated” works. Worse, I think that trying to get motivated and failing creates negative feedback loop which makes some people discouraged.

Did you ever saw an animal in nature exercising to be stronger and have chances of getting better pray? Just us humans would do this to ourselves. It may make us miserable, make create a false image of us comparing ourselves against success and stating failure.

Try to remember how many motivation books, courses, videos, podcasts, and own programs you went through in your life? Was there a significant result? Or maybe the outcome was typical: going great for the first few days, then forgot about it.

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*Don't fight with “lazy”. Embrace it. Learn from it. Use it.*

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“Getting motivated” is something external and automatic, a result, not a starting point.

But where to start then?

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<sup>1</sup> As of December 2022

Just leverage that, what we've been designed to, through evolution. Learn brain-hacking techniques of gamification to use them towards shaping a better life.

Don't fight with "lazy". Embrace it. Learn from it. Use it. Make "lazy option" the one that builds you. Don't "try to not break the streak", make coming back as welcoming and easy as possible, so there is no shaming for that gap in your workout calendar. Do not look for external sources of motivation, seek within, observe, see "why" before you come up with "how".

One last thing, for all those overachievers addicted to growth: take it easy. Try with one thing see if it works. Gamification would not turn your life around. It can just help in areas where continuous effort over time will pay off decently.

## **Why I decided to write this book**

The applied social sciences in psychology, social psychology, and psychiatry offer an expansive field of study that can be incredibly fascinating. Psychology focuses on the study of human behavior, both conscious and unconscious, to gain insights into why people act certain ways and how they can better understand themselves. Social psychology is the exploration of how individuals perceive and interact with each other in a variety of contexts, such as family dynamics or friendships. Psychiatry is the medical specialty concerned with diagnosing, preventing, and treating mental illness. It examines mental processes to understand the effects on behavior and physical health. This includes analyzing how thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and biological factors influence each other. Together these

disciplines explore not only what it means to think but also what it means to be human.

The last few decades have brought incredible advances in technology, efficiency, robotization, automation, and innovation. These new tools have the potential to revolutionize the ways in which we interact with the world and our understanding of what it means to think. This can be seen in fields such as artificial intelligence that are rapidly changing how humans interact with computers and machines. Additionally, advancements in automation and robotics have made many jobs more efficient and given us access to data that would have previously been inaccessible. By combining these new tools with psychological insights, researchers can gain a better understanding of the world and its inhabitants. The possibilities are truly limitless.

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*I imagine you, the reader, as someone who is an expert in his own field, delivering a lot of value towards the society.*

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It can be immensely rewarding to connect the dots between these two areas of study. By utilizing the tools and technology available in today's world, while also observing people and ourselves, we can deliver technical solutions with a human-centric approach. This is especially true when it comes to understanding mental processes. For example, using big data collected from individuals can allow researchers to gain insight into how different factors such as environment or genetics affect behavior. Similarly, by incorporating advanced multi-field analysis (interview, MRI, blood tests, genetics and so on) into psychiatry, doctors can create more personalized treatments for patients that take

into account their individual needs. With this kind of combination of technology and psychology, we are able to consider the whole person rather than just isolated aspects.

I personally dislike “management”, but I really like the concept of helping other people, and this part of management is really rewarding. I needed toolset, to minimize time spent managing others, while still being able to help them (and myself too).

I imagine you, the reader, as someone who is an expert in his own field, delivering a lot of value towards the society. I also think of you, as someone who constantly seeks new knowledge, who wants to understand the world around us better. Someone, who wants to make an impact.

In addition, I hope that you have a sense of mission in life and that some of the knowledge that was put in here will help you succeed in the long run.

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*The book includes hands-on activities that can be used to immediately start implementing gamification techniques in any organization.*

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This book on gamification provides an in-depth look into how to use game mechanics and design principles to engage and motivate people. It covers the fundamentals of gamification, such as defining goals, understanding motivations, designing rewards systems, creating persuasive game mechanics, and tracking progress. It also delves deeper into topics such as using data analysis to improve user experience, getting feedback from users,

managing virtual economies, and engaging with players through.

The book includes hands-on activities that can be used to immediately start implementing gamification techniques in any organization. Additionally, the book offers guidance on measuring the effectiveness of these techniques so that you can assess which ones work best for your business.

Ultimately, this book, serves as a easy-to-ready guide for anyone looking to understand how to use gamification effectively to achieve desired outcomes.

Chapter 1 describes historic and socio-economic background behind growing importance of gamified entertainment which brings attention into how the way we think and the way we play is changing.

Chapter 2 goes through the famous Octalysis framework by Yu-kai Chou

Chapters 3 and 4 describe core concepts that are part of gamification: rewards and leaderboards.

Chapter 5 summarizes how quickly our brain reacts to internal perception of incoming pain or pleasure, and how powerful the optimization system in our head really is. The important part of this chapter is to understand that system must be “convenient” to work, otherwise we rely on motivation and will power which are finite resources of energy.

Chapter 6 taps into the concept of leadership struggles in recent times with generational gap being wider than ever and radical remote work adaptation. It shows how gamification mechanics can make some processes that

were previously connected with direct leadership can now be automated.

Chapter 7 continues thoughts from chapter 6 by expanding on the topic of rules boundary. How powerful can it be, and how important it is to monitor it constantly to prevent the outcome from going sideways.

Chapter 8 is dedicated to readers who are willing to try gamification concepts on themselves first. Gamification doesn't require a group of people to work (look at single player games). If we split our goals into small enough steps and provide measures of instant gratification, we can do this too. This chapter shows 2 practical examples of implementation of such system to achieve personal goals.

Chapter 9 is dedicated mostly to readers that are already "in". That started or are about to start and wanted to know what the things are to carefully look for when "game is on". Gamification can quickly go wrong, if rules, or boundaries, or rewards or abuse are not handled quickly.

Chapter 10 provides a quick summary of key definitions created in this book.

Chapter 11. describes author's approach to gamification. What tools he uses in his daily work.

Chapter 12. is a source of inspiration, provides examples of great products that used gamification to help them win their market.

Chapter 13. is very practical, it shows step by step guide of how-to setup a gamification system that proved to be working, using OGAMIFY as an example. This is a clear

point-by-point list that will make sure that the new system will have all necessary elements.

Multiple case studies, real-life practical tips make this book unique in terms of practical approach. Moreover, the research about the topic continues, the final chapter of the book is also an invitation to share your experiences with me, so we can both benefit from it.

## **Practical promises of gamification**

We all want to do better in life. We want to create a better company, become a wiser manager, make an impact, stand out. Therefore so-called 'self-help' books market segment is so large. The popularity of self-help books is an indication of the widespread desire to improve oneself and make a positive impact on their lives. These books often provide step-by-step instructions on how to achieve success, whether it be in managing a business, becoming a better leader, or even just gaining more confidence. While they might not always achieve their promised results, they provide readers with an accessible way to change their outlook and attitude towards life. Self-help books also enable readers to gain insight into how others have achieved success and can serve as a source of motivation for them to pursue their own dreams and aspirations. Ultimately, these books are valuable resources for anyone looking to make improvements in their life and reach greater heights of personal accomplishment.

Chances are, you picked up this book, having similar hopes. Is Gamification the silver-bullet everyone else is missing? Would it make a long-lasting change in quality of my life? Would I stop procrastinating? Would I be able to solve every



human-related problem in my life using it? Rather not, so let's discuss some "why not's" first.

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*Implementing a successful gamification program requires both knowledge and experience.*

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Implementing a successful gamification program requires both knowledge and experience. In the case of our office gamification software, it was developed and tested internally for several years before it was trialed by external companies. Even then, it took learning from the results of these trials to move forward with further development. The trial phase is important because it provides an opportunity to identify any flaws in the system and to develop strategies for improving them. Additionally, the trial period allows for feedback from users that can be incorporated into future iterations of the software. It is also important to develop a comprehensive understanding of the company's goals and objectives when developing a gamification program, so that it can be tailored to meet their specific needs. Once a gamification program has been designed, only then users start the testing period, in order to ensure that all elements of the program are functioning as desired.

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*Our brains are wired in various ways, and we really need to spend a lot of time observing behavior of people to be able to catch a glimpse of what seems to be working and what is not.*

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Through carefully monitoring of the outcomes during the testing stage, there is usually multiple factors of adjustment that are made, before rolling out to all users. Through careful planning and execution, an effective gamification program can be created that successfully motivates users while providing meaningful data to inform business decisions.

It is like other business workflow optimization tools like implementing LEAN principles into the organization, it cannot be done on a few sessions with “consultants”. It requires long-term dedication to do it correctly. It is very hard to take shortcuts, as part of the journey is testing and observation.

Each company is different, and each person is different. Even cultural differences between countries can have very big impact on efficiency of Gamification process. Our brains are wired in various ways, and we really need to spend a lot of time observing behavior of people to be able to catch a glimpse of what seems to be working and what is not.

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*Some Gamification tools and techniques are universal, but the true power comes from the experience.*

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Some Gamification tools and techniques are universal, we will talk about them in this book, but the true power always comes from the experience and making it aligned with how users/players think. Succeeding in this area will probably require hiring external experts. Otherwise, there is a chance that number of mistakes made would cast shadow on the chances of getting to correct implementation. Experience plays a key role and can't be taught through a book, just like

with an experienced psychiatrist vs someone who just graduated out of med school.

Experience really matters. The reason why I wrote this book is to make an introduction to the concept, something lightweight, something easy to pass on, to help your organization better understand if you can leverage Gamification in your business and what kind of tools you can use to do that. This sums up a few years of practical use of gamification in both business and personal goal setting. So, expect, light discussion, cool examples, rather easy language. Where possible, I will provide references to external studies proving the point, but sometimes I will be writing straight from my experience.

Here it is. A practical book about gamification, I hope it will help you!

Dariusz

# **Chapter 1.**

## **The fascinating boom**

# A glimpse into the recent history of gaming

As someone born in 1989, during my young years, I was able to see the rapid growth of the PC gaming industry and PC adaptation in general. Normally you would buy a game on a CD disk - the decision would be precisely planned. The printed magazines about games were a big business at the time and 'free demo' versions of games attached to them were supposed to advertise the game for a broader audience. There was also a big market of piracy since most people couldn't afford to purchase original licenses, so number of players of a game often greatly outreached the number of official sales.

During that time, games competed mostly with the advancements in quality of graphics and complex animations/video sections. Some bigger games had to be deployed on a few CD disks that the player would have to switch during the game (for example to load a video scene for the new chapter). Games were often complex and difficult (or had a very variable difficulty and this is why the difficulty levels were introduced in almost every game) and long release cycle (from code through CD disk to customer's desk) meant that if the game came out buggy or unstable, there wasn't much producer was able to do about it.

In these conditions, the success of the game was rather random, and the 'science' of making a good game (in terms of playability) was just starting to emerge. We had to wait another 10 years (early 2000's) to start seeing the modern broadband Internet network adaptations that created a huge boom of multi-player games. Because PC sets were still relatively expensive, not to mention broadband Internet

connection, so-called “PC cafe's” gained popularity (at least in developing countries). People would come there, pay a small fee, and play their favorite multiplayer game for a few hours. The concept is still very popular in some Asian regions (South Korea), although in US/European nations it quickly diminished back into personal computing at home.

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*The rise of multiplayer games has enabled developers to gather game-changing amount of valuable data.*

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Due to the rising popularity of online gaming, developers have begun to take advantage of the data they can collect from players' behavior. This has allowed them to gain insight into what makes a successful game, as well as potential trends in the industry. This led to an increase in investment in developing games with multiplayer elements. With this investment came a rise in both the number and quality of multiplayer games available. This progress has been driven by improved technology, more sophisticated game mechanics, and increases in overall player engagement. These advancements have allowed for larger communities of players to come together and enjoy their favorite titles for longer periods of time. As a result, game studios have seen an increased demand for online gaming experiences, leading to an increase in revenue for both developers and publishers alike. The rise of multiplayer games has enabled developers to gather game-changing amount of valuable data about player behavior that can help shape future titles and keep existing franchises relevant and engaging.

The introduction of the iPhone and its ability to allow users to instantly install or purchase mobile apps has created a new business model. Instead of licensing an app from a

developer, customers now have the option of downloading free versions with paid features (Freemium), free versions with ads (Free+Ads) or paying for the full version of the app. This shift in business models has changed how developers generate revenue from their mobile apps and two key factors have become increasingly important in measuring success: Install Growth numbers and Customer Lifetime Value (CLV).

Install Growth numbers measure the number of users who have downloaded an app over a period, allowing developers to understand how successful an app is in terms of user acquisition and engagement. CLV on the other hand measures the amount of revenue generated by each user over the lifetime of their relationship with the app, providing developers with insights into how well an app is monetizing its user base.

Developers can leverage these metrics to optimize pricing structures, advertising campaigns, user incentives, etc., helping them maximize their revenues while ensuring that customer satisfaction remains high. By understanding both install growth numbers and CLV, developers can gain valuable insights into what works best for their application and capitalize on that knowledge.

Install growth was a strategy that assumed providing so much added value (or marketing value) for free or a very low price, that the app would land at the top of the 'most popular' rankings and gain visibility that profited in hundreds of millions of downloads. "Viral" marketing, if reached its target, would be the cheapest way to promote a product on the market, surpassing other marketing strategies by a large margin.

The long-term engagement was very important, because (except for apps paid for upfront), the monetization mechanism required either prolonged use of the app (ads would show every few minutes) or engagement strong enough that in-app purchases would pay off the cost of the game and start generating profits. The “Lifetime Value” of a customer was equally important to the viral effect.

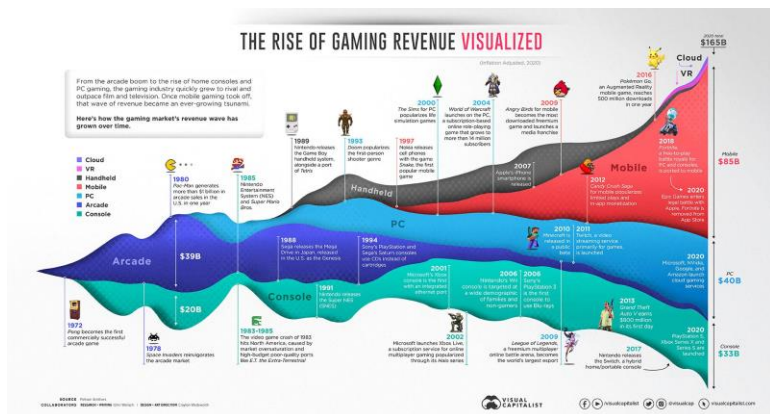


Figure 1 The rise of gaming revenue visualized. Source: <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/>

Mobile gaming has had a significant impact on game design, particularly regarding the success of trivia games. These games require simple actions and have a relatively low cost of development, while still providing high levels of customer engagement. Traditional AAA game producers have had to adjust their strategies when entering the mobile market, shifting away from emphasizing storytelling and cinematics in favor of focusing more on player behavior. This shift has resulted in mobile games that are far less expensive to develop but are still popular with users due to their ability to capture their attention for longer periods of time. As technology continues to improve and mobile gaming becomes increasingly popular, the demand for unique and engaging experiences will only grow, making it essential for



developers to continue adapting their strategies to stay competitive in the mobile gaming industry.

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*The growth of the gaming industry gave us lots of knowledge about what attracts specific user behavior, how to create real value from virtual items, and how to create lasting habits through digital product.*

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The gaming industry has experienced a continued growth in recent years, with mobile gaming growing most rapidly. This growth is due in large part to an increase in Internet and technology access, allowing more people the opportunity to play games. Furthermore, the emergence of online marketplaces such as Steam have greatly facilitated the purchase of new games, leading to an increase in profits for creators. As such, this has resulted in increased incentives for expansion within the gaming industry. In addition, box sales of games are becoming less prevalent, orienting purchase and consumption towards digital formats instead. This transition has resulted in additional growth for the industry overall. Looking forward to the future, it is expected that growth will continue as technology continues to advance and become increasingly accessible.

The growth of the gaming industry gave us lots of knowledge about what attracts specific user behavior, how to create real value from virtual items, and how to create lasting habits through digital product. This has accelerated the Gamification-based inventions in other areas too and this is where we are now.

# Casual games / casual interaction

In the early 2000's, playing video games was a phenomenon that was mostly enjoyed by children and some adults, primarily males who had access to modern equipment. However, there was still a large portion of the population that hadn't yet adopted this trend.

Over time, the growing popularity of the “casual games” allowed a wider group of people to participate in the entertainment, without spending too much time and effort on understanding the complexity of the games. Such games would be mostly operated by mouse (Bejeweled) or by only a few keys on the keyboard (Tetris). Some games didn't even have a winning scenario and focused only on simple actions and consequences (The Sims).

The rapid growth of the cell phone adaptation and their simple games (Snake, 2048, Sudoku) added to the trend. With modern smartphones casual gaming is reaching its peak with games that could be turned on, played for just a few minutes to accomplish ‘something’ and turned off. Every time a player would get back to the game, he would be immediately presented with his next small but interesting challenge to do. This is a very convenient way of consuming the entertainment as it doesn't require the player's effort to understand the whole game concept, he just needs to focus on one very little job he is seeing in front of him..

The way we consume entertainment has also influenced the way we consume content. From paper magazines towards on-line portals, through mobile-friendly news portals, through video, now reaching the format of quick-to-scroll short videos (TikTok and other formats) that allow the user

to immediately switch contents as soon as he loses interest. After the scroll interaction, which is just a small movement of a thumb now, “the new and cool thing” will be in front of his eyes within a fraction of a second.

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*Services that gradually lean towards working with shorter attention spans, seem to be winning the modern market.*

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Services that gradually lean towards working with shorter attention spans, seem to be winning the modern market. Even if we don't consider the TikTok app as a game or gamified experience, it still uses techniques widely used in the gaming industry to create long-term commitment and to effectively win the market. We don't have to be “a gamer”, to be completely addicted to *scrollable content systems* on our mobile phones. These services were designed to prolong total user screen time and maximize ad revenues.

It all ends up in the public places where, almost everyone is “glued” to their screen. Scrolling through feed, never letting their brains to rest properly. Prolonged screen time has been shown to have a negative effect on psychological well-being. A study conducted in 2018 looked at the effects of online gaming and found that those who used more than 5 hours of gaming per day reported significantly higher levels of anxiety, depression, and social phobia (Souza et al., 2018). Other studies have found similar results, with increased screen time associated with decreased self-esteem, increased feelings of loneliness, and an increased risk for developing Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Finally, research has also suggested that prolonged screen time can lead to sleep deprivation, which has been linked to an increase in depressive symptoms<sup>i</sup>.

There is still hope, though. Mindfulness and meditation are becoming increasingly popular, especially as these practices can now be accessed through smartphone apps. These apps focus on the positive aspects of behavioral psychology and often use a "gamified" approach to help individuals reach a state of calmness and contentment. Rather than stressing the brain, these apps provide positive feedback that helps users reach a more peaceful mental state. By taking advantage of modern technology, these apps are making it easier for people to take time for themselves and create healthier habits in their lives.

## Engineered Customer Experience

The B2C (Business to Customer) industry has been using the concept of gamification to improve customer engagement and loyalty in their businesses. This is especially true in the professional online services industry, where customers interact with businesses virtually, as well as in retail environments, where customers can have physical contact with businesses. Typical techniques use:

- **Progress bars**, achievements and targets are implemented to modern banking platforms.
- Most booking websites, try to motivate visitors for immediate actions through **emulation of scarcity** of the product
- **Loyalty cards** and points are present in almost every retail store. It is very hard to get out of any chain network shop right now without being asked if you "already have your membership card".
- On top of this, worth mentioning are many different loyalty programs that are giving customers **rewards**

for certain actions (usually buying more products or bringing friends as new customers).

- Something most people would fall into, would be **premium memberships** that gives them a unique occasion to feel special and invite only selected friends to the premium space. Gmail - the email service from Google, started this way, as an “invited users only”. Good examples are also premium gold or black credit cards issued by banks that are supposed to help clients manifest his wealth every time they make a purchase.

Obviously one can disagree, that these are not quite ‘gamification’ examples. Behavioral psychology is a branch of psychology that seeks to explain how behavior is affected by external stimuli and experiences. Gamification, on the other hand, is the use of game-design elements such as points, levels, rewards, feedback loops, and leaderboards in non-gaming contexts to engage users and influence their behavior. Although it may be difficult to differentiate between these two concepts at times, the basic idea behind them is the same: encouraging customers to follow a designed sales process while providing positive reinforcement so they become long-term loyal customers. By integrating elements from behavioral psychology and applying them in gamified ways, businesses can increase customer engagement and satisfaction while driving loyalty for their brand.

Gamification would grow mostly in these sectors where there is not much room left for price/value competition and value can be ‘created’. Retail/network providers/banks - are usually working on similar margin levels because they have similar cost structure, so any extra improvement that can

help them retain their customer base is cherished, but at the same time they are very limited on what extra they can offer.

The rather frustrating consequence of above practices is that customers are now bombarded with 'attempts' to engage them into loyalty actions or promotions at almost every step, which greatly reduces the effect of these tools. The use of gamification techniques to encourage customer loyalty and engagement can be effective, but it must be done in thoughtful and strategic ways. If businesses are too aggressive with their efforts, customers may become overwhelmed or even turned off. This could result in a decrease in engagement, which is the opposite of what businesses are trying to achieve. Thus, it is important for companies to consider the impact their reward systems have on customers and ensure that they are creating an enjoyable experience that will motivate them to remain loyal.

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*Gamification creates true engagement, brings joy, sense of accomplishment and builds habits.*

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To conclude and make diversification between the terms easier in the rest of the book, let's draw a fine line between normal marketing and Gamification: **Gamification creates true engagement, brings joy, sense of accomplishment and builds habits**; While, for the sake of this book, we would define Marketing as *series of actions that motivate certain actions and creates perceived image of product or service*.

We focus on joy and engagement as the key elements of the process.

Worth noting is also recent research results that suggest that adding gamification into the purchase process, may not have positive impact on purchase intent of a customer. Moreover, gamification was taking some of the attention capacity from the customers, making them remember less information about the product.<sup>ii</sup> This suggests that gamification shouldn't be blindly implemented to any system, and there are environments, where it could be just an unnecessary distraction, rather than added value.

## **Spending money on Entertainment**

Let's take a step back and discuss the phenomenon of 'buying entertainment'. If we think about it, spending money on entertainment is not 100% logical, it does provide much more perceived, imaginary value than the real one. People spend their money to get short-term gains - feeling a bit better for some time, experiencing interesting feelings or sensations. In the long run, it all washes out with time, but we seem to keep repeating the cycle. It seems like entertainment is some form of food for the brain, a way to recharge, relax, or sometimes escape reality. Once basic needs like food, and security are met, people start to look for something else that would make the quality of their existence better.

Before modern technological breakthroughs, spending money on entertainment meant mostly going out (cinema, restaurant, shopping, clubs) or in-house activities (watching TV, meeting friends, consumption of alcoholic drinks or other drugs). With growing access to the new technologies, the patterns of social behavior are changing too: streaming services are reducing the need for going to cinemas, and

engagement in online games provide a substitute to in-person meetings with friends.

The important factor that shifted the consumer behavior, became the accessibility and abundance of new ways of entertainment. With very addictive, free-to-play games, that can launch almost instantly on any device and vast adaptation of mobile phones and tablets (especially among a very young audience), the new market emerged with loyal users spending a few hours a day consuming content and watching ads or buying in-app-purchases.

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*The new generation of gamers are trained to experience constant gratification*

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What we can observe now, impacts the future. The new generation of gamers are trained to experience constant gratification in games and are conditioned to expect access to very quick context changes during media consumption (social media, video platforms). They also are accustomed to paying for virtual goods, which often even do not make any difference in the game but help them create a distinctive online presence (for example skins, avatars).

The modern customer is also very impatient and more likely to spend money on speeding up a game that is designed exactly in a way that causes periodic frustration to monetize it. This part of the future prediction is not very optimistic. There is a growing worry among psychologists and psychiatrists about future issues with the mental stability of the current young audience, on top of learning disabilities that come from shortened attention spans.



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*These changes will also force future businesses managers to adopt the way they communicate with their customers or employees.*

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This book is discussing all the above changes to help you reflect and better understand some of the causes of current social changes. These changes will also force future businesses managers to adopt the way they communicate with their customers or employees.

This new, modern society will behave in a different way to what we have used to. Forms of constant gratification and motivation will be expected by their already conditioned brains. The market and its offering are supposed to continue its growth in this direction as exploiting it brings additional profits. We, as a people, have adapted already, and chances are the trend would continue, unless external factors would come that would impact it.

## **Socio-economic trends supporting Gamification**

In the previous chapter, there was a short discussion about the present and future generations that would be trained to use and consume gamified products and would need a certain way of communication with them that takes into consideration the different way their brain functions after years of daily conditioning. It may seem quite pessimistic, but the purpose of this book is to remain objective and show both sides of the story. On the upside, the growing trend to notice these changes may create opportunities for us to find a better balance between stimulation and calmness.

There are also other important factors that support the trend of the growing impact of Gamification on our lives: the growing amount of people living alone - detached from society, work-from-home accessibility, lockdowns, climate sanctions reducing travel availability, and social score introduction.

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*While living longsome live, filled with difficulties, people learn to appreciate the new forms of entertainment.*

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Living alone has become something normal these days, while only a few decades ago would be rather uncommon. For example, in Sweden almost 50% of population lives alone<sup>iii</sup>. People now meet their future romantic partners mainly through the Internet. Study from 2019 shows that 48% of 18–29-year old's used dating apps<sup>iv</sup>. Since then, numbers only grew. Studies have consistently shown that while dating apps may make it easier to find someone with similar interests and values, they do not necessarily lead to longer-lasting relationships<sup>v</sup>. The effect is that in modern economy, more and more people live alone (or with parents) and can't imagine anything different. They are also leaning into avoiding too much social interaction and sometimes avoiding dating at all. Growing costs of living make it harder to reverse the trend, housing bubbles are putting 'first buyers' off the market as income is growing slower than housing prices. According to data from Zillow<sup>vi</sup>, the median U.S. home price rose 8.2% from April 2020 to April 2021, while incomes were growing at only 2%. This means that potential first-time buyers need to find ways to bridge this gap to be able to buy a house. While living longsome live, filled with difficulties, people learn to appreciate the new

forms of entertainment. Playing video games and consuming online content are the obviously most attainable choices.

Work-from-home accessibility has experienced considerable growth in recent decades. Previously, certain professions were more likely to be able to take advantage of this arrangement (e.g. traveling salespeople, professionals); however, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the rate of adoption<sup>vii</sup> and caused many employers to reassess their stance on the viability of remote work. Cost-saving for both employer and employee is often cited as one of the primary advantages, but research has suggested that there are several potential downsides associated with telecommuting<sup>viii</sup>, such as decreased communication, detachment from workplace culture, stress due to lack of workplace support, and other psychological issues.

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*Management of companies with remote workers have a tough challenge to create processes and procedures that reconnect people and ensure they feel that their work is valued and important.*

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Management of companies with remote workers have a tough challenge to create processes and procedures that reconnect people and ensure they feel that their work is valued and important. Some ideas on automation in these areas would be covered in later chapters of this book.

Pandemic lockdowns completely shifted people's way of thinking about their homes - now it has become a place that has to fit additional needs like prolonged stay without going

out, greater access to the daily sun, and enough room for all family members to conduct their work without interrupting each other. People invest more in electronic devices to stay connected in case a future lockdown happens, they also were forced to shift their previous habits: like going to cinemas, restaurants or even flying for holidays. Money saved on the entertainment outside of the house is spent inside of it. Pandemic lockdowns also made precedence for future lockdowns - for example potential climatic lockdowns, access to fuel or air transport might be limited due to Co2 emissions cuts. The overall level of stress is rising, which is causing more people to look for a way to entertain themselves.

The final remark about socio-economic changes comes from the far east where China's government has been effectively implementing a country-wide social score that appreciates good behavior and limits people's freedom when they are behaving in an inappropriate way. What In China became a dystopian future realization, could be a very popular thing in western countries where social scores could help to appreciate people who do socially positive tasks - even small but important things like cleaning trash from the streets or supporting charitable causes. Almost unimaginable in theory, but very near and possible future in practice. The problem of lack of transparency and ease of abuse of the system will stay, which brings moral question whether such systems should be implemented at all.

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*Society is moving towards scoring systems.  
Business needs to adapt to it.*

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To summarize, society is moving towards scoring systems and the way our society is shaping supports increase of entertainment use: gaming included. Those changes impact how people think and change their behavior patterns. Business needs to adapt to it.

**Chapter 2.**  
**The Octalysis framework**  
**by Yu-kai Chou**

No book about gamification should be published without noticing the great work by Yu-kai Chou called the “Octalysis framework”. Yu-kay Chou was a pioneer in describing the forces behind human intention that make games work.

This book agrees with Chou’s theory but simplifies it a bit. For example, the term ownership is replaced by advice to use badges, scarcity is replaced with one-time challenges, custom badges and time-based events, and avoidance is narrowed to suggesting making your goals public. Still, the Chou’s theory is a great way to understand the principles of gamification system, therefore this whole chapter is dedicated to brief explanation of it. For more examples, I recommend the book “Actionable Gamification”.

Octalysis is a 8-step gamification framework created by Yu-kai Chou. It is based on the idea that the most successful products and experiences use a combination of 8 core motivations to drive user engagement. These 8 core motivations are called the 8 Core Drives of Octalysis and they are:

1. Epic Meaning & Calling
2. Development & Accomplishment
3. Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback
4. Ownership & Possession
5. Social Influence & Relatedness
6. Unpredictability & Curiosity
7. Scarcity & Impatience
8. Loss & Avoidance

The Octalysis framework can be used to evaluate the user experience of a product or service, and to identify areas for improvement. It can also be used to develop user engagement strategies and measure the impact of those strategies.

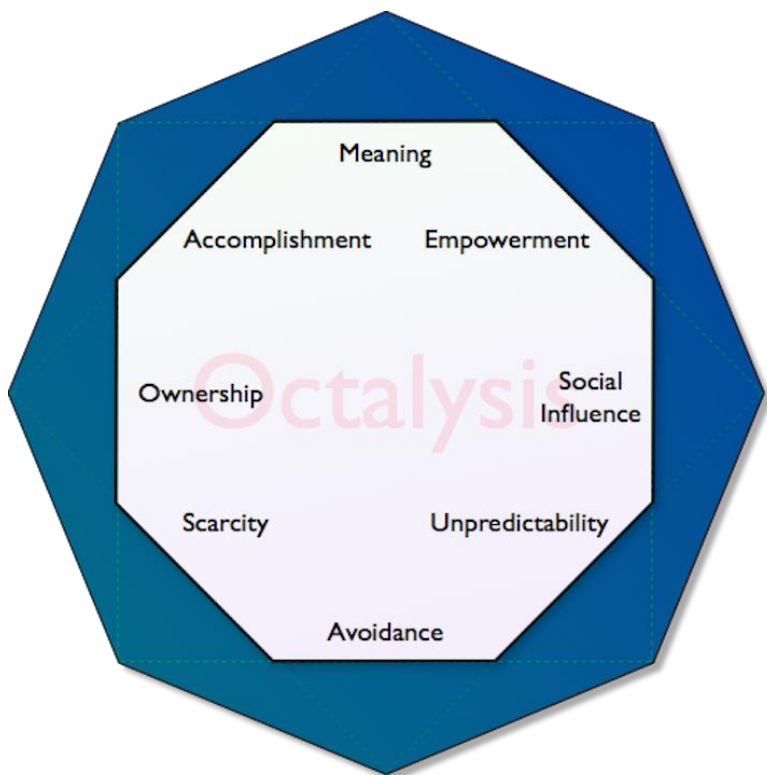


Figure 2 The Octalysis framework by Yu-kai Chou - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=45487148>

## 1. Epic Meaning & Calling

It is the motivation that comes from finding a higher purpose or goal that is larger than ourselves. This drive is based on



the idea that people are motivated to achieve something that is greater than themselves, and that aligns with their values, beliefs, and identity.

Epic meaning & calling can be used to turn a mundane task into a purposeful mission, and to inspire users to take action and keep engaging with your product or service. This core drive can be used to create compelling stories and experiences that make users feel like they are part of something larger than themselves.

## **2. Development & Accomplishment**

It is the motivation that comes from seeing progress and achieving goals. This drive is based on the idea that people are motivated to accomplish something and to see progress towards their goals.

Development & Accomplishment can be used to give users a sense of progress and achievement, and to reward their efforts. This core drive can be used to create measurable goals, rewards, and challenges that will motivate users to keep engaging with your product or service.

## **3. Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback**

It is the motivation that comes from expressing creativity and receiving feedback. This drive is based on the idea that people are motivated to express themselves and to receive feedback from their peers.

Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback can be used to give users the freedom to be creative and to receive feedback from others. This core drive can be used to create user-

generated content, collaborative tools, and feedback mechanisms that will motivate users to keep engaging with your product or service.

## **4. Ownership & Possession**

It is the motivation that comes from having control and ownership of something. This drive is based on the idea that people are motivated to have a sense of ownership and control. Ownership & Possession can be used to give users the feeling of ownership and control, and to reward them for their efforts.

This core drive can be used to create exclusive rewards, privileges, and customization options that will motivate users to keep engaging with your product or service.

## **5. Social Influence & Relatedness**

It is the motivation that comes from connecting with other people and being part of a group. This drive is based on the idea that people are motivated to build relationships and to be part of a larger community.

Social Influence & Relatedness can be used to give users the opportunity to connect with others and to feel like they are part of something larger than themselves. This core drive can be used to create social features, activities, and events that will motivate users to keep engaging with your product or service.

## **6. Unpredictability & Curiosity**

It is the motivation that comes from exploring new things and discovering the unknown. This drive is based on the idea

that people are motivated to explore, discover, and learn. Unpredictability & Curiosity can be used to give users the freedom to explore and discover new things.

This core drive can be used to create random rewards, surprise elements, and exploration activities that will motivate users to keep engaging with your product or service.

## **7. Scarcity & Impatience**

It is the motivation that comes from having limited resources and wanting something quickly. This drive is based on the idea that people are motivated to take action when resources are limited, and time is of the essence.

Scarcity & Impatience can be used to give users the feeling of urgency and to reward them for taking action quickly. This core drive can be used to create limited-time offers, exclusive rewards, and timed activities that will motivate users to keep engaging with your product or service.

## **8. Loss & Avoidance**

It is the motivation that comes from avoiding loss and protecting what is already owned. This drive is based on the idea that people are motivated to protect what they have and to avoid loss.

Loss & Avoidance can be used to give users the feeling of security and to reward them for taking action. This core drive can be used to create loyalty programs, protection mechanisms, and risk-avoidance activities that will motivate users to keep engaging with your product or service.

## Final word on Octalysis Framework

Octalysis framework provides great analysis to the gamification design, allowing us to better understand the forces behind human motivation. Even more can be found in Chou's book. Worth remembering is the fact that, there is no magical number of 8 that fills the subject completely. Human nature is very complex, and we still discover its layers and functions. Not without a reason, modern psychiatry is one of the quickest developing medical professions. What seemed to be a good treatment 20 years ago, is often excluded now. Similar behavioral psychology, multiple famous discoveries from the past have been verified and corrected later. Disciplines that try to understand human mind and behavior are having it very difficult time provide long-lasting universal rules.

The core of being able to design a good gamification system is observation. This is also the beauty of it: being able to notice behavioral changes, draw right conclusions and modify the system to make it function better.

The system starts with you: the game master, and only you know the exact specificity of the environment you are trying to gamify. The more you will see and experience, the better you would become at it.

# **Chapter 3.**

## **Good mood goes first**

## **The often-overlooked preliminary step**

While preparing this book, I went through multiple studies that tackled implementing of gamification in specific systems and compared the results: before and after. The common problem I noticed is that the research was often difficult to draw real conclusions from. Some studies proved that gamification elements increase user engagement, while others that the commercial result was not significant. In a situation like this, I started to wonder if there is something important, we are missing.

In a gaming world, the game doesn't "open itself" randomly. There is a clear intention on the player first: he picks the game, he purchases it, he waits for the download, then presses the play button expecting a lot of good time.

How about commercial environment? We cannot assume that a potential customer or employee will deliberately pick our gamification mechanic out of his will to entertain himself. Unless we have budget for AAA game, the system we will create will be simplified and stripped out of cinematics, fantastic gameplay story, animated effects and many more elements that make normal gaming a true joy.

The answer to that, might be introduction of preliminary step that would 'warm up' the audience and prepare it for the upcoming play. The game master needs to "set the mood" first.

## **Invitation to play**

The first 'warm up' option might be just an invitation to play. Something that would let the user to make decision whether

he wants to participate or not. Some players will decide to stay off, while remaining skeptical, but there are ways to get their attention.

Joining the game should also be as simple and easy as possible. Every extra step or click increases the chance of user abandoning the process. Also, information how to join the game needs to be clearly visible, ideally at all times. Ready to start.

## **Show how others play**

We cannot enforce a good mood, but we can show the in-play action in a way that is inviting. There is a couple of typical ways of doing it: public leaderboards, public progress announcements, public appraisal, seasonal updates.

Public leaderboards, showcased to everyone – not just participants, proves that the game is already on, that there is a progress, the hesitant user is missing out on.

Public progress announcements are similar, with one distinction – they connect with people who already play and provides them a place to react, giving the game a social proof.

Public appraisal rewards the top players, create success stories, create definition of “success” in everyone’s mind.

Seasonal updates can be triggered by game master, therefore don’t need much user interaction to thrive. They also offer a great testing platform, ability to change strategy, redefine system.

There are many more similar techniques, but the main idea is to make sure that the output of the game is clearly visible to anyone – not only for the players.

## **Define the end game scenario**

One of the common mistakes is introducing gamification elements as the core, forgetting that it should serve a purpose, there needs to be a visible end goal, and the goals needs to be related to a player, not company or organization. Almost every game on the market can be “completed”, gamification system without the end game scenario might not be interesting enough.

Our brain makes decision based on effort vs potential reward. Before user gets accustomed with the system, the imagination of the potential reward should be elevated, so he will be willing to spend his energy on learning a new system. An example in marketing might be a prize to win, an example in company culture might be getting the “employee of the month” title. Something worth the chase.

## **Make sure the “play” seems easy**

Another point to tackle is false precautions, some users might have regarding time investment they imagine they would have to do. If gamification is done by excel sheet and the only work needed to participate is sending a message to coworker “hey, I just did this, please add my points”, this might seem easy, not requiring much learning, but once more sophisticated system is set to be introduced, additional steps might be needed. People do not dream about “registering” in a new system, learning it, dealing with a new user interface. A solution might be to familiarize the players with the system, before asking them to enter – a 20 second screencast video showing how to score the first points is an example of such action.



# **Chapter 3.**

## **Reward system**

# The fundamental strength of rewards

Pain and pleasure evolutionary mechanism is a powerful tool for survival. It is hardwired into their biology and allows even a tiny fish to avoid what is harmful or dangerous while swimming towards what feels good, usually food. This instinctive behavior ensures the organism's survival through seeking out positive experiences and avoiding negative ones. As a result, this mechanism has been encoded so deeply into our genetic code that it would be virtually impossible not to express it.

People seek gratification for their actions and can get really motivated for the promise of future reward. Being able to fully understand the mechanisms behind this can be truly eye-opening, by explaining a lot about human behavior around us. This concept of reward-motivation has been explored and studied by many different scientists and researchers. For instance, research from neurologists have proven that when a person is rewarded for their actions, it releases dopamine in the brain, which is known to be associated with pleasure and reward. Similarly, psychologists have found that people are more likely to engage in a task if they know that there will be tangible benefit at the end.

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*Typically, rewards are part of a well-established system that rarely changes. This consistent system creates a clear path between certain actions and the rewards that accompany them.*

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Overall, this understanding of reward-motivation can help to explain why humans act in certain ways in pursuit of rewards and why they can feel deflated when faced with goals they perceive as impossible or unachievable. It thus sheds light on our behavior as individuals and within society as a whole.

Rewards play an important role in many industries, acting as a motivator for employees and helping organizations to run more efficiently. Rewards can take the form of job compensation, bonuses, promotions, or any other incentives offered by employers. Typically, rewards are part of a well-established system that rarely changes. For instance, job compensation is often paid out monthly while bonuses might be paid out at the end of each quarter. Additionally, there may also be opportunities to submit requests for promotion twice a year. This consistent system creates a clear path between certain actions and the rewards that accompany them.

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*The illusion of reward and the trill of almost getting it are much stronger motivators than logical explanations.*

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Rewards can also be occasional (for example receiving a public appraisal for work performance) and uncertain. The whole gambling industry relies in general on rewards that are uncertain and promises of future rewards that are unrealistic. We all know that playing in casino means statistically losing money, yet the gambling has been one of the oldest trades known to society, and a surprisingly big number of very intelligent people became victims of gambling addiction. The illusion of reward and the trill of almost getting it are much stronger motivators than logical explanations.

Lotteries are also very popular and have much lower negative mental connotation than other means of gambling. Lotteries are also leveraging the concept of a promise of future reward that is paid by a minimal action. People play against very small chance of fulfilling a big dream. Lotteries can have social-positive impact, bonding a group of people, who put together their share to support one winner - like charity actions, or insurance companies (although it wouldn't be a winner, rather a 'beneficiary').

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*People like to daydream about playing important role in other people lives, hero-featuring movies are the ones that sell best.*

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Another example are charity actions which can be really rewarding too. Why people sacrifice their hard-earned money to give them out to stranger? They could spend this money on entertainment elsewhere, yet sometimes they bend their will when approached by a stranger asking them to support a good cause. People like to daydream about playing important role in other people lives, hero-featuring movies are the ones that sell best. Helping others brings an incredible burst of positive feelings to the one who decided to exercise his generosity. Just imagination that this money would help someone who is in need creates a motivator strong enough to voluntarily take an action.

Reciprocity is an essential part of our society, both in terms of helping those in need and having successful businesses. It encourages individuals to support one another, creating a sense of unity and understanding that we are all in this together. It fosters trust between people and organizations and forms the foundation of a strong relationship between

individuals or groups. In a business setting, reciprocity plays an important role in keeping the organization viable and prosperous. It ensures that employees feel supported and valued as members of the company and that there is mutual respect between them. Reciprocity also provides incentives for employees to work with each other to achieve shared goals, leading to greater productivity and success. Overall, reciprocity supports the idea that when we help each other out, we all benefit in some way.

The current consumer market also implemented multiple forms of reward system. Most examples showcase a typical static form - they do not use probability-based mechanics (like casino), but still can find ways to provide added value through inconsistency (for example sending "special offer just for you" promotional coupon every now and then, rather than weekly or daily, "black Friday", "cyber Monday"). These campaigns are focused on making sure to not make the system fully predictable. To not build expectation of reward, and rather leverage surprise to connect the brand with positive feelings. It can be easily seen in online shopping centers, where packaged products with "bonuses" tend to sell better, even if the total prices are higher than it would be to just compose the same package from separate products offers. The surprise/promotion/color shuts off the logical part of the brain, making it good enough for retailers to use.

Some business attempted to bolster their customer base by establishing various networks and loyalty cards, hoping to encourage customers to return in exchange for special discounts. However, many customers didn't feel like they were receiving any additional benefit from the programs and thus failed to stay engaged. As a result, the loyalty initiatives

did not result in any major increase in customer loyalty or retention.

## Habit formation

Rewards can be used as a mechanism to stimulate creating of good habits. To create a good long-lasting habit, repetition is needed. Study conducted by Maxwell Maltz claims that human brain needs a minimum of 21 days for the old 'self-image' to be replaced by the new one<sup>ix</sup>. The basis of the study was his practice as a surgeon, and observation of how long patients felt 'weird' after plastic surgery or anticipated phantom pains after amputations.

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*To create a good long-lasting habit, repetition is needed.*

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More scientific approach was presented by Phillippa Lally<sup>x</sup>. She has examined 96 people during a 12-week period. Each of the participants choose one new habit and was supposed to report each day on their progress: did they continued with the habit, and how automatic it felt.

Results? Turned out that the habit formation took a very broad range of time to complete. From as little as 18 days to even 254 days. The study also confirmed that forgetting the daily action from time to time did not impact the overall success rate. Which mean, it is much more important to have the opportunity to change available and easy accessible for a prolonged period of time, than to focus on disciplining yourself to reach 100% success rate.

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*Good gamification practices use series of small actions that require little time and build sense of accomplishment.*

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In current tech industry the knowledge about habit formation has been rather abused by marketing emails, mobile notification systems and SMS messages that try to bring users back into the apps from time to time.

Good business gamification practices use series of different small actions that require little time investments and provide rewarding system, that creates sense of continuous accomplishment. Exact techniques will be explained later in this book.

## **Case study:**

### **Sprint to finish the book**

On December 4th I have decided that there is very little time left in the year, while I still have about 40% of book yet to be written to reach my final goal.

The goal was previously to write at least 85 pages, but the recent progress was so good, that it encouraged me to wish for more. Deliver full 150 pages of 250-word standard format text.

I counted the number of workdays left, number of hours I would probably need (about 60, which was too way too optimistic) and carefully placed timeslots in my calendar to make that happen. It was quite tightly packed. Some time slots were quite ambitions - for example being put between 6 and 9 am on Saturday.

What was the result?

I did nothing. 2 weeks of a full stop. Writing book went easy when I cherished every page, every %, every new chapter, every entry in my progress spreadsheet, but it quickly became an impossible challenge when I tried to enslave myself to deliver it all on time.

Habit needs gradual progress. It is very easy to break the streak. Scare yourself away from the task by making it a bit too big to handle.

I realized what I was doing and promised myself to not try doing this again. On top of that, I set a new milestone that would be much closer to the current progress. Moving from 85 to 120 pages is better than moving from 85 to 85 and blaming myself for no progress!



# Rewards vs pain avoidance

Pain avoidance mechanism is very strong in our biology. From time to time, an incident may happen in our life. In that case, our survival instincts are taking control and making us act quickly and in full force to avoid pain, danger, or some other tragic event (including being publicly shamed or laughed at). These emotions are very strong and can be influencing a big part of someone's life. Who could possibly remain calm, relaxed, and live like there is nothing going to happen when it is only 2 hours left before an important exam?

According to a study by researchers at the National University of Singapore and the University of Arizona<sup>xi</sup>, some people showed more interest in a task when they are assured that failure would be avoided.

The study examined participants' responses to gamified systems that featured pain-avoidance features. Participants were asked to perform tasks with different levels of risk, and their responses were measured in terms of task commitment and goal-directed behavior. The results showed that participants responded positively to the pain-avoidance feature and were more committed to the task when they knew they could avoid failure. Furthermore, participants demonstrated higher levels of goal-directed behavior when they had access to the pain-avoidance feature.

Overall, these findings suggest that gamification can be used as an effective tool for increasing motivation and engagement in tasks by leveraging people's desire to avoid failure. Furthermore, this approach may be particularly

useful when individuals struggle with traditionally structured forms of motivation, such as deadlines or rewards. By providing users with a system designed around avoiding negative outcomes, such as failure or punishment, gamification can help drive engagement for difficult or unappealing tasks, leading to potentially higher rates of success and satisfaction compared to conventional methods of motivation.

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*Stress creates resentment and other negative feelings alongside physical issues that only build up.*

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In theory gamification could leverage more on pain-avoidance mechanisms as they are usually stronger - who haven't heard a story about "that" new manager who joined, decided to "change a lot of things" insisting on reporting and discipline? The problem with this approach is that, although it may provide short-term results, it is basically very stressful, and even if the stress is hidden deep inside, it may also do a lot of harm in the long run. Stress creates resentment and other negative feelings alongside physical issues that only build up. Even professional trainers of animals (for example dog behaviorists) have chosen the 'benefit' path over the 'pain avoidance' as it just provides better results and creates many other long-lasting positive effects: counting mental and psychical health of animals and fewer incidents.

Studies (Steel et. al, 2016<sup>xii</sup>) also show that rewards are the way to go in the current world of complex tasks. How to implement this knowledge is another story. In today's world we have access to multiple different 'pleasure' actions, why would we pick the ones that are productive? Why would I

want to write 5 pages of book in exchange for some previously picked 'reward', where I could just lay in bed for a few hours and feel quite good anyway? The answer is indeed complex, as it lies at the heart of practical implementation of gamification systems.

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*We need the user to be challenged just enough so he still sees value in continuing the whole process.*

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Setting a good balance between actions, progress and constant gratification is one of the key points of modern games. We need the user to be challenged just enough so he still sees value in continuing the whole process. Citing past example, maybe writing 5 pages of book would be too much for one day, but getting a reward to write first 5 sentences each day? Small enough, habitual enough. Might work. Over the long run, might create a habit. Turns out that those people who succeed in writing usually share the same suggestion with other people: just write every day and you will become good at it.

Pain avoidance could be added as an element of the mix, especially to 'jumpstart' new habits creation. For some people escaping the bad future might be the trigger to start changing their life - for example starting to take care of one's health after getting a very bad blood test result. The pain avoidance mechanism might become satisfied very quickly though and with nothing else replacing it, the good new habits would not have enough time to form. This is where it might be useful, to implement reward system and climb up through the ladder based on good motivation from there.

Understanding how pain avoidance and reward seeking systems work in our biology, allows to build systems that can help change behavior of people in various situations.

Social interactions can also be triggering a very strong pain avoidance effect. Who is not afraid of public speaking? Only a several brave people. Public statements, public and transparent progress tracking are one of the tools that business gamification systems can use to increase their user's chance of finishing that goal.

## **Case study:**

### **The wall of personal goals**

One of managers at TDSOFT had an idea to gather a group of volunteers can publicly state 3 key things they would like to achieve till the end of the year.

It was at the end of Q3, so everyone had plenty of time to deliver on the promises.

Once done, he printed all the responses on a wall near the kitchen, to be publicly seen. During the first month nothing really happened, but mid Q4, some of the goals had “check” mark on them. Once a few started to appear, the pressure grew very quickly.

This board transformed into a form of public presence of a person, therefore the need to deliver according to plan was growing each week.

It taught us, through our own experience, that social validation can be a very strong motivator and helped us to understand that it leverages pain-avoidance mechanism

much more than pleasure-driven. We want to prove we are good, because we truly don't want to be seen as someone who does not deliver on his promises.

## **Key elements of a good reward system in gamification**

A good reward system is defined by the ability to maximize the positive output and attractiveness of the reward. A successful rewards system must have clarity, immediacy, appropriateness, positive reinforcement, and attainability<sup>xiii</sup>. Clarity means that the reward must be explicitly stated; what is received in return for effort and when will it arrive? Immediacy also means that rewards must be available right away in order to create a sense of satisfaction and motivation to continue working hard<sup>xiv</sup>. A reward's appropriateness depends on its value being proportional to the effort put in<sup>xv</sup>. It must also suit individual values interests in order to create a feeling of significance<sup>xvi</sup>. Rewards must additionally provide incentive for repeat performance as well as support improved extrinsic motivation<sup>xvii</sup>. Finally, attainability ensures success beliefs are not hindered by job title or position within a company; everyone has equal access<sup>xviii</sup>. This combination of factors creates a good rewards system which encourages employee behaviors that are beneficial to companies' goals.

The following properties play a key role in a good reward system:

1. The challenge is transparent and fair
2. Reward is small enough
3. Reward is known and seems attainable
4. Reward is known from the start
5. Payout is immediate

## **1.The challenge is transparent and fair**

It is very important for the reward system to be transparent - the user needs to know exactly what he needs to do, to get the reward. There shouldn't be any obvious loopholes in the system that would allow the perceived chance of getting a reward to diminish. For example: "create an article for a company blog" is simple enough, but "create an article for a company blog and get a 5-star review from your boss" means that the system could easily become an unfair struggle, sparking lots of grief in participants. Each time someone else decides about what is 'good enough', the motivation decreases. The challenge should be binary: either it is completed, or it isn't.

It is worth noting that, the quality or quantity of players "output" of the process is far less important than creating a good habit and providing feeling of improvement. Sport players often use micro-weights during their sessions, they know they can't progress by 5kg of weight each week but adding two 0.25kg plates is possible and provides sense of growth, even though the objective difference is almost negligible.

## 2. Reward is small enough to not become the final destination

The main motivation of the gamification system is player motivation until he creates habits. That means things start to go by themselves and just need small reinforcement from time to time. If a reward is too big, or lasts for too long, then there are 2 negative symptoms that may occur: because of the reward size it is just too distant, so it doesn't feel like it is 'almost there to get'. The second aspect is that one big reward may cause player to lose motivation in game as future rewards are not that important anymore.

For example, for me personally, while writing this book, setting up pages to count milestones every 5 pages in exchange for fun personal IT projects was helpful at some point. As I really wanted to go back to this personal software project I had and was just 4 pages away from it, it seemed that the reward is worth adding extra effort. Below is the picture showing state of "rewards" I had back then. It can also be observed that the first reward has set the bar quite high (20 pages milestone) - it connects with the fact that it is always much easier to start something than to finish it and boosting the motivation at start is not that important, what is really needed is to find a way to keep the momentum 'past the fun part'.

Milestone	Reward			
20 pages	brag about writing a book			
30 pages	do a small personal it project - time limit 8h - can be night			
35 pages	do a small personal it project - time limit 8h - can be night			

*Figure 3 Simplistic excel-based milestone plan for writing a book*

Sometimes the small reward "write 5 pages" is still too big, if the habit isn't strong enough yet, or other environmental

issues play the role (lack of time, tiredness etc). It should still be there but adding much smaller rewards might be important in this situation.

In computer gaming, what can be observed is broad adaptation of tiny rewards that require minimum possible effort, just as a warmup. For example, in book writing, it may be “write at least 1 word a day”. And then “write anything for 3 days in a row”.

It is very important to observe player behavior and tune the system to ensure he is still entertained enough to continue. With mass market of online gaming, analysis of player behavior is easy as it is quantitative. With personal tasks, you need to really observe your own actions and feelings to react on time.

### **3. (potential) Reward is known and seems attainable**

As we know, our brain is very smart in acting with minimal effort to get the reward, which is absolutely fine. If there is a task or challenge, but there isn't any habitual attachment to it and there isn't any known reward, the motivation to start it might be very low, maybe except for a group of individuals who have very strong will and discipline. This book isn't about people with strong will, but normal people like me & you, so a better system needs to be invented.

Players need to understand what the final goal is. Rewards that are monetary might have less effect than precisely defined rewards, for example a laptop or a new car might have better results than 1000\$ or 20000\$ as it allows player to properly envision the goal. State lotteries are doing the same thing when advertising themselves, they obviously



also show the grand prize, but the ad is about the promise of the new lifestyle that comes with it.

The potential reward also doesn't have to be physical, or even hold any monetary value. We can see that in sports, where the 1st place and standing on the podium is what counts the most. The book will cover the topic of rankings/leaderboards later.

Sometimes, seeing reaching a very small milestone might be very rewarding. The picture below shows example of a very satisfying number of having 85% progress is very close. Only 200 words away.

2		Word count					
	Date	target	% target	% progress	weekly target	pages	pages gain
32	03.01.2023	31697	84.53	1.01	13/15	126.8	1.5

*Figure 4 Book writing gamification, example of using multiple counters to provide many reward anchors.*

#### **4. Reward is known before the game starts**

Always try to plan the rewards ahead. Even if it is just “employee of the month” recognition, it should be clearly stated at the beginning of the journey. It also should remain clearly stated during the gameplay. Always within reach.

Same with personal motivation: if you are creating a reward system for yourself, to change your habits or finish a master's degree, you should plan rewards for yourself for certain achievements or milestones. You might want to write down a wish-list of nice things you will buy yourself in exchange for achieving goals. Let the brain imagine how good it may feel just after productive work.

In business gamification modifying the rewards “in play” might decrease perceived probability of success (system may change again against the player best interest). But sometimes it is needed, for example if you will observe that you are craving for something else, it might be worthwhile to switch the reward for something more appealing during the game.

## **5. Immediate and transparent ‘payout’**

Sometimes it is hard to deliver the reward immediately, for example if someone won a t-shirt, he needs to wait a few days for it to arrive, but from the perspective of behavioral psychology, what matters is the ‘feeling of winning’.

When you create systems that gamify and reward specific behavior, make sure the information that player got the reward is available instantly after he ‘claimed’ it or did everything he had to do.

For example, in a computer game it would be an equivalent of ‘cash’ that can be spent in the store immediately after collecting it, and getting the virtual goods immediately after the purchase. The shorter the cycle is, the stronger the incentive, to work towards the next payout.

## Innovative Thinking Challenge II



Claim reward



250 Coins + ● Innovative Thinker II Badge

*Figure 5 A big green "Claim reward" ensures the feeling of getting the reward immediately after completing special set of tasks. Source: ogamify.com*

Another take is transparency. System needs to avoid situations where one can hide his achievements and therefore submit/claim them all at one go at the end of the competition. This would feel unfair for all other participants, and business gamification is about the maximum engagement of the mass, not of the one who outsmarted others.

## Case study:

### The issue of trust vs system abuse

One of the players submitted a lot of tasks that require spending time on a self-development task like listening to podcasts or reading books. Management decided that it is too easy to 'press the button' and get points so introduced additional required text field where player had to share insights of what did he learned during that time. Did it work? No.

What happened is that player would still submit a lot of tasks and just fill in the required data, so the problem of lack of balance was still there, while other users lost a bit of

momentum and motivation. Something that was easy now became 'work', and our brains are wired to avoid 'work'.

Finally, the company reverted the rule, only asking to provide name of the material or link, so that it could be briefly checked whether it is following the guidelines or not. This helped.

The lesson learned by TDSOFT was to make sure that claiming points and playing is easy enough, if we make the task too hard, nobody will care to keep doing it - and as we know from previous parts, repetition of action over the long period of time is the key to create new habits.

There is ongoing discussion on where the right balance between trust is and allowing to abuse the system. Should we add more rules, checks and tests, or trust the players they will do good?

One of the additional improvements introduced was "report suspicious activity" task as a way for players to "report" behavior that felt unfair by the. It was very effective, because even though, imbalance remained, the players who felt the game is unfair had a way to air it out and be listened to.

## **Types of rewards**

Now, as we know what rewards are and how to place a system that makes them worth 'getting', let's discuss typical kinds of rewards through some main sources of motivation.

Rewards are an effective way to motivate employees, customers and others. There are various types of rewards that can be used to motivate people, including monetary rewards such as bonuses, gift cards, and paid vacation time;

non-monetary rewards such as recognition or appreciation; and intrinsic rewards such as the feeling of accomplishment or a sense of pride. Research has shown that a combination of different types of rewards is often the most effective way to motivate people.

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*Although monetary rewards may provide short-term motivation, they do not always lead to long-term success.*

---

Monetary rewards are the most common type of reward used to motivate employees, customers, and other individuals. Monetary rewards are tangible items that can be easily exchanged for value such as money, goods, or services. Examples include bonuses, salary increases, gift cards or vouchers. Studies have shown that although monetary rewards may provide short-term motivation, they do not always lead to long-term success<sup>xix</sup>.

Non-monetary rewards focus on intangible things that have value but cannot be exchanged for immediate monetary gain. These can include recognition for a job well done through verbal praise or awards; increased autonomy in decision making; additional responsibilities; or flexible working hours<sup>xx</sup>. Non-monetary rewards can also involve creating connections between employees and fostering team spirit by organizing social events<sup>xxi</sup>. Research indicates that non-monetary rewards can be more effective than monetary incentives in creating a sense of loyalty from employees<sup>xxii</sup>.

Intrinsic rewards are personal feelings of satisfaction or accomplishment derived from doing something rewarding for its own sake rather than for external reasons<sup>xxiii</sup>. Intrinsic

motivation comes from within an individual and is driven by an internal desire to achieve a goal or reach a higher level of achievement<sup>xxiv</sup>. Examples include feeling satisfied with one's work after completing a task; having control over one's work environment; taking pride in accomplishments; or setting challenging goals<sup>xxv</sup>. Intrinsic motivation leads to greater commitment and higher performance levels compared with extrinsic forms of motivation<sup>xxvi</sup>.

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*Combining different types of rewards may provide the most effective way to ensure sustained motivation over time.*

---

In summary, there are various types of rewards available that can be used to motivate individuals including monetary incentives, non-monetary perks, and intrinsic motivators. Research shows that combining different types may provide the most effective way to ensure sustained motivation over time. Monetary incentives alone may provide short term gains but not necessarily lead to lasting success whereas non-monetary and intrinsic motivators have been found to create loyalty from employees and increase overall performance levels respectively.

## **Rewards in gamification**

To create a successful system, multiple motivation sources needs to be mixed together and thoughtfully implemented to fit the purpose. Mixing them is important because each individual player will react in a different way. Providing a balanced mix, ensures the rewards are helping massive adaptation of the mechanics:

# 1. Personal achievement

Most of us are driven by our inner image, our feeling of 'self-worth'. Succeeding at something increases our level of self-worth by a fine margin, we feel better with ourselves, we walk with our chin pointing up, and our back straight. Personal achievement in gamification systems is connected with milestones, level-ups, ranking advancements. If someone is trying to gamify writing a master thesis or something else that is an objectively big but personal task, he could for example set a milestone every 5 pages and treat himself with a custom reward (snack, longer break, other reward).

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*Personal achievement in gamification systems is connected with milestones, level-ups, ranking advancements*

---

Personal achievement is measurable, which means that by adding ways to measure it, you increase the impact of it. Milestones, rankings, achievements, level-ups are a way to measure progress.

## 2. Competition and Recognition

**Leaderboards** - they are very efficient because the player can quickly compare himself to others, find his personal goal (getting higher than someone) and create a strategy based on smaller goals to climb up the ladder.

The first thing each player looks for in a leaderboard is his own position. Then most people look how much more points

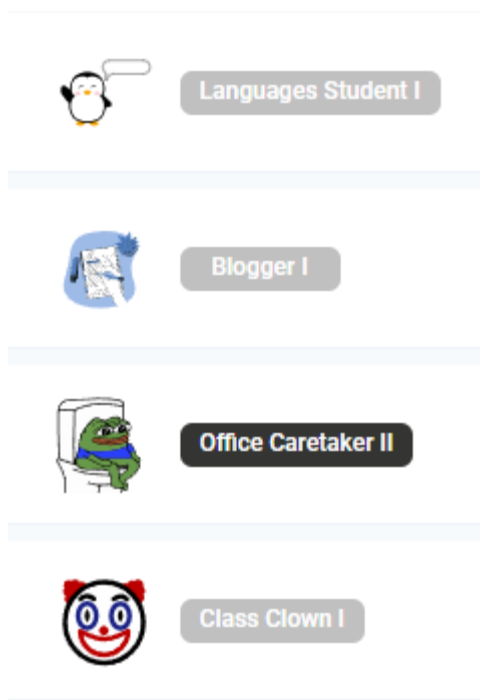
they need to get higher and if it is still attainable, worth the effort to win.

Periodic **celebration** - employee of the month, progress summaries, or even milestones - if these are public, then they become points of personal recognition.

For someone who is trying to follow the personal gamification path, 'competition' could be realized by marking the daily progress so that one can easily compare how he is doing today, what is the gain compared to previous day, previous week, previous month. What is the average to compare to.

The need to be recognized can also be satisfied by virtual assets (described as popular phenomenon in Chapter 1.) like badges. Only one person may hold the 1st position on the board, but others have a way to showcase their unique, for example by proudly showing their "office caretaker II", or "party starter" badge.



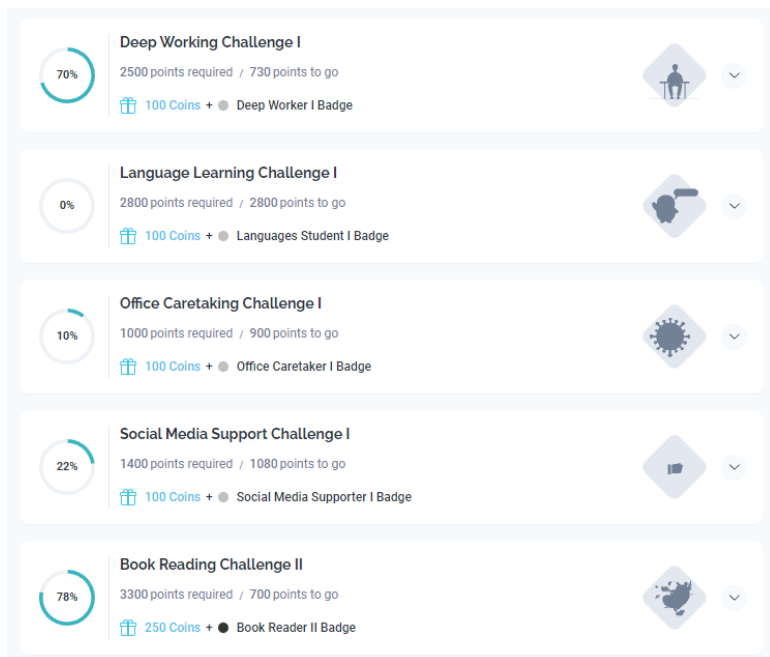


*Figure 6 Example of badges in OGAMIFY*

Figure above shows some of the badges used by employees at the TDSOFT company. These icons allow team members to personalize their presence on the leaderboard and show others what is their main driver of action right now. It makes things personal.

### **3. Setting multiple goals at once**

One of the strongest techniques to keep the momentum of motivation going is to analyze the progress by multiple factors, so that slowdowns in one area do not break the image and feeling of progress.

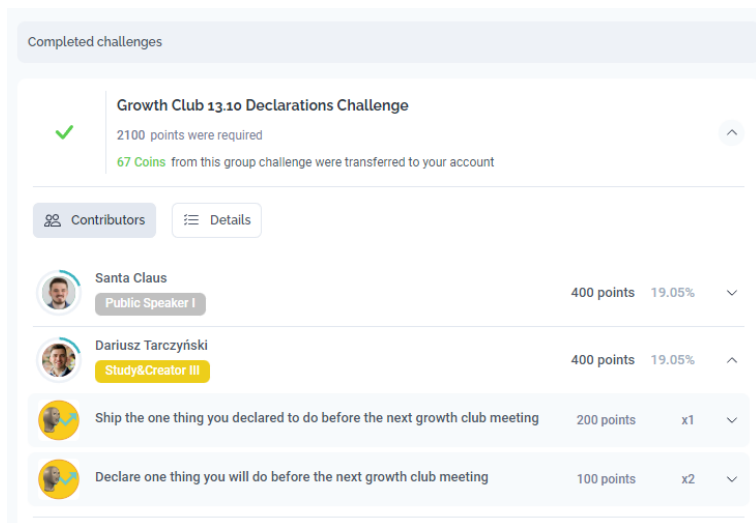


*Figure 7 Example of challenges in OGAMIFY*

In Ogamify, office gamification product, the concept was delivered through challenges. Personal challenges, provide yet another anchor point to someone who is struggling to achieve real progress.

In the above example, getting praised for helping with the office is far from now, but it doesn't seem that far off to get the book reading challenge II, which also seems to provide extra reward (250 coins and a badge).

On top of that, company is testing the impact of group challenges (where special rules have to be met like everyone in the group to complete the task on time).



*Figure 8 Example of a group challenge in OGAMIFY*

All this: tasks, personal challenges, group challenges, leaderboards, create a mixture of multiple points of motivation, to get into the system and continue the habit.

One of the most common mistakes is done in gamification is lack of ways to achieve feeling of progress and it can kill any great idea in the early stage. Human brain is not a robot, it requires variety of flavors, to feel engaged.

## 4. Physical reward / prize (optional)

Physical reward is something a player can purchase/attain for himself or for others. Handling physical rewards requires special attention and is not really the key element of gamification. I always suggest starting without it, and introduce it later on, when some experience about player behavior is gathered.

From the practical point of view adding real rewards into the system can really help with engagement of some users - the group that would otherwise not give the system a proper chance. There is a great opportunity in it, but also precaution is needed. It must be done in a system that is already properly balanced, to avoid feeling of unfair system exploitations without value added.


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*Some people may be motivated by their own comfort.  
Other people may be mainly motivated by helping others.  
Both groups should be considered.*

---

In the software system OGAMIFY, there is a concept of **'coins'** and **'store'** so players can pick rewards by themselves - this seems to be working very well in 2 dimensions:

- Some people are motivated by their own comfort, they would use the store to purchase 'nice things' for themselves for free, they would treat it as an added company bonus
- Some people are motivated by helping others, they would use the store to commit into group purchases, to have something that is shared. It might be a piece of gear for the office, a budget for an evening party, or a special fund for charitable causes.




**Apple AirPods PRO**

The AirPods Pro are the more premium version of Apple's standard AirPods. They feature...

Progress **0/4400**

Not enough coins **4400** Show details




**250 EUR educational voucher**

A lot of stonks for a stonk.

Progress **0/3500**

Not enough coins **3500** Show details



**Book up to 50 PLN**


Do you enjoy reading and want to develop your skills or learn something new? Choose a...

Progress **0/300**

Claim **300** Show details

Figure 9 Example of personal reward in OGAMIFY

Group rewards



**Quality Microphone for our chillroom events**

**PILNE - zbiórka w trybie dynamit...**

Progress **6900/8000**

Donate **50** Show details

Figure 10 Example of a group reward in OGAMIFY

Group rewards are like lottery systems in terms of behavioral psychology. They entertain the part of our brain that wants to be a valuable member of society, do something together, achieve common goal, serve bigger purpose. Charity might be a great cause for a group reward but collecting 'found's to go out together also proven to be very fun way of event organization.

## Case study:

### No-Coin August

TDSOFT is openly testing their gamification mechanics on its own team members. Everyone got used to it by now, well everyone had to get used to it. There wasn't an option.

One of the brave experiments was disabling the 'store' functionality from the app for a month.

The team has split into 2 main opinion groups:

- Some people said that store wasn't the main driver and removing it, wouldn't change anything
- Some said that this is ridiculous, unprofessional and store should be immediately brought back!

What numbers have shown?

The average points scored has decreased month-to-month by about 2/3. Which looks like store was really an important driver of action.

At the same time 80% of the activity drop came from the players who were at the top usually - the ones that tried to maximize their output. The 'mediocre players' behavior remained mostly the same.

So, was the store needed? Yes, but the company now understands that there are multiple sources of motivations, different person characteristics and we cannot put everyone into the same basket.

Some players take pleasure from getting the store rewards, some just count the points, and there are other kinds of motivation too.

Company has decided to bring the store back but is now more aware than ever of the importance of real-life testing of its assumptions.

## **5. Time-based reward**

Living in the modern world, people 'never have time'. So there are many things we wish we would be doing, but there are so many other important responsibilities, we never get to it.

It is hard to justify going to a spa for a massage or spending some extra time on the woodworking project in the garage when we are busy and have work to do. At the same time, it becomes the perfect reward - especially in building a self-motivation system. Doing something for yourself is a great mental-health exercise too, helps to keep a good work-life balance, and allows you to get some perspective. All this while actually progressing with the important goal we gamify.

"I never have time" usually means "I have more important duties to do right now", so having a good explanation backing our hobby time can possibly solve it. That kind of reward may also be very budget friendly, as the consumed resource is time that will pass away anyway.

## **6. Higher means**

There is a part of us that seek deeper value in our doing, and actively look for ways to making this world a better place. Charity or other good causes is a very good motivator for many of us.

Some players would not be motivated by a \$100usd cash reward but would go quite far to 'win' \$100usd and be able to pick a charity that would receive donation.

## **7. Surprise**

Surprises create special moments in our life, the scientific studies behind casino slot games showed that the human brain receives dopamine shock just before the reward of winning is known, not after. The possibility of reward triggers the signal. Lottery scratch cards are using exactly this process to attract more clients - the moment just before scratching them is something special.

For that to work, you need to know the 'pool' or what could possibly be there and find the possible rewards attractive - or at least one the items there attractive. Would it be spinning a big wheel of fortune or randomly picking a piece of paper from a closed box - it all connects with the same mechanics.

A good mix of the above, would result in creation of an interesting and engaging system that would be just fun to play, while helping to achieve bigger goals at the same time.

The proper balance of the reward system would create an everlasting experience that would keep on delivering



entertainment, while helping succeed with the business goals at the same time. This work requires a lot of intuition to deliver properly, so implementing a good reward system in a company could require a few initial trials before the full commitment. This process can be much smoother with the help of external experts, as knowledge and experience play a key role in a successful implementation of the reward system mechanics.

## **Case study:**

### **Support for Ukraine**

Early 2022, a tragic news broke our hearts. Ukraine has been attacked by Russia starting, in fact, a full-scale war, destroying their country and killing people who lived there. At that time, 3 team members of TDSOFT had Ukrainian nationality. Everyone was ready to commit and help the cause, we felt that we must do something.

The company decided to send a designated amount of cash support towards the fighting Ukraine through the OGAMIFY store system.

New group item has been added to the store - meaning that everyone could chip in. Result? The company fulfilled 'the budget' of the support within 3 days, and had to quickly prepare another one, as people asked for it.

Many players who were skeptical, and used OGAMIFY very rarely, got engaged and started using the system afterwards.

What is the most important aspect of this? People gathered towards common goal. This created a sense being one team

working towards something that was more important. Everyone could have his share of this good feeling that comes from helping others at need.

On top of that, the company got a clear strategy for future charity events - by letting the team to vote with their own actions and their own progress.

## **8. Random rewards**

The topic of random reward is rather subtle. From one end it provides the thrill of having a chance to much broader group of potential winners than typical leaderboard. From another end it is not directly connected between action and reward.

Random rewards shouldn't be used as a basis of the system. Players who are really committing into the game might quickly feel the unfair treatment compared to the ones who didn't do much but got "lucky".

The larger the group, the bigger the problem. But without random rewards, when only winners win, the larger the group also the bigger is the problem. People who feel there is no chance to win, will not participate.

Solution might be hybrid model. Some rewards may be random to support players with lower rankings, giving them an additional boost to continuing using the system. Since the gamification is periodic and the leaderboard is cleared after each month, it provides opportunity to add an additional "draw" with special rewards. This draw could be still taking into consideration number of points each player gathered (the more points, the higher % of winning), or just

provide equal chances to each player to exceed a certain threshold (for example 5000 points a month)

## Case study:

### Special monthly prize

For some time, the system of random rewards was tested in TDSOFT. After the end of each month, all points of each player have been summed together which created a number, say 90442 points in total for that month. Company created a special online meeting, where random number generator was triggered, and the number it picked (from the range 0-90441) was checked against which player had that number. This resulted in drawing a winner.

	A	B	C
1			
2			
3	Name	Points	Number:
4	John	10000	0..9999
5	Alex	5000	10000..14999
6	Adam	3000	15000..17999
7			
8	TOTAL	18000	
9			

Figure 11 Assigning the winning number for each player

The winner would get a small surprise price like a voucher, a book, or a free day off.

The draw attracted almost every employee of the company, as there was a lot of curiosity “if I will win something”.

It was an interesting experiment, although it is worth noting that this random reward did not motivate people play more. It seems that it rather motivated people to attend the meeting to check if they won anything.

# **Chapter 4.**

## **Leaderboards**

# Leaderboards show the truth.

Everyone has their own definition of yourself, self-worth. Sometimes this internal opinion is accurate, but most of the time we are biased in one way or another. This picture of “self” is a very important part of our mentality and is a carefully protected part of our mind. Leaderboards, through their immediate and transparent showcase of player position against others, are very important for every player’s self-positioning.

In modern organizations, giving feedback on your performance is known to be a good practice. The person who is receiving feedback, especially that kind of feedback, that leaves some things for him to work on, is very alert and self-conscious. On the stake is the validation of his self-worth picture against the external world. Leaderboards, provide a similar kind of feedback because they are fair and transparent, it is obvious where the player’s position comes from, who managed to climb higher, and who is the top performer.

Feedback is a powerful management tool. Especially when it is fair, open, transparent, and not introducing other people's feelings, opinions and emotions. Leaderboards, when implemented properly, deliver this kind of feedback. They show the truth of what it is, they show your actual location. You are 5th, or 1st, or last but the position is objective, based on calculated results.

---

*Leaderboards can provide a very strong incentive  
to take the challenge.*

---

Now, seeing that leaderboard, the player must admit that there is a difference between his internal self-worth image and the objective case of company ranking.

When looking at the leaderboard, it immediately becomes personal, it gives a very strong motivation as your brain would try very hard to fix the error - do actions required to go back to the top and be above people you think you should be better than.

This is also why leaderboards are almost a required part of modern games – they are very powerful. The player has a certain level, and a certain position in the group and knows that the only way to improve is to play more than others and play better than others. He is seeing himself immediately rewarded in the ranking after winning a few matches. This is a truly powerful immediate ego-based feedback loop.

There are also negative aspects of the leaderboards - sometimes they can demotivate from participation at all. If you know you can never win, why bother doing anything and being there? It may happen if the rules to win are unfair, favoring certain people or if the team is not balanced. For example, in sales: a senior sales manager with 20 years of experience and access to big corporate contracts would always be at the top compared to 20 other people working under his wing. Those people would not see a point in chasing the victory in this game, the game is already lost.

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*If you know you can never win,  
why bother doing anything?*

---

It is very important to use leaderboard actions as a feedback mechanism - people who stop participating are showing very important symptoms that must be observed and acted on. Experience comes in handy again. The final goal is not to let the selected few to win, but to invite everyone to participate regularly.

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*The final goal is not to let only the "few" to win,  
but to invite everyone to participate regularly.*

---

Most people think that they are smarter than average. This phenomenon is known as the "above-average effect" or the "better-than-average effect"<sup>xxvii</sup>. Studies have found that more than 70% of participants rate themselves as being smarter than average<sup>xxviii</sup>. Obviously, from a mathematical point of view, most people cannot be smarter than average. Ideally, in a world where everyone would know exactly the level of his intelligence, half of the population should admit they are less blessed in this area.

The interesting conclusion from this known fact is that any true, open, and transparent ranking or leaderboard will cause interesting emotions and actions within users. Most of the time, they would feel, something was not right when looking at their position. Players would believe they belong higher up and expand their efforts to prove it.

Even if this leaderboard really shows their true input and their true impact. People do not look up to see themselves in the top half, they wish for top places if anything. As in sports, victory starts from the 3<sup>rd</sup> place up.



Leaderboard users are in the game, even if they didn't plan to, because each time they would look at the scoreboard they would (statistically speaking) feel that they should be higher up.

## The good transparency

Let's consider a distinction between a good transparency and a bad one in the context of management. Not to be confused with "truth". Transparency would be defined here as a free information transfer.

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*The good transparency is uplifting the team.*

---

The good transparency is uplifting the team. It helps people to achieve more and be noticed by others. This is data, that provides a solid, valuable feedback that allows to move forward, to understand what the next step is. The good transparency shows the source of a good outcome.

The bad transparency shows data that might reduce morale, or cause tensions. Just imagine having transparent salaries without transparent work performance. For example, if top salesman makes 3x more than average and this data is being shown without context, other employees might immediately feel that something is not right, start thinking that people are making agreements behind their back or the company just forgot to notice how important they are - "maybe it is time to look for a job that would start noticing my actions!"

---

*The good transparency shows the source of success,  
not the final effect of it.*

---

The good transparency shows the source of success, not the final effect of it. Sales team performance comparison is probably the easiest example, and it is already implemented in most CRM systems. When you know that you brought customers worth 2x the team average, you have a direct connection between your work and the company's success and growth.

It becomes a bit harder with other positions, but it is still achievable. Company gamification systems (like the one described in detail at the end of the book called OGamify) are trying to catch the good habits that make the company success come true. Whether it is learning, event participation or even writing an article - if the actions provide a true source of value, if they help in some area in a measurable way, they will be acknowledged, and the ranking would matter to the people.

## **A practical example of a universal leaderboard**

The best tool to implement such a tool in no-time would be to just use spreadsheets - software every company has access to. Spreadsheets are incredibly powerful because they allow design flexibility and complex computation in one place.

Below, there is a showcase of sample gamification system written in one rather simplistic spreadsheet.

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Extensions Help Las					
100% \$ % .0 .00 123 Default (Ari... 10					
H24	fx				
	A	B	C	D	
2	WHO	WHEN	WHAT	POINTS	
3	Adam	2.03	cleainnig coffe machine	180	
4	John	4.03	opening the office	100	
5	Mike	4.03	taking out trash	50	
6	John	5.03	opening the office	100	
7	Adam	6.03	cleaning coffee machine	200	
8	John	8.03	taking out trash	50	
9	Mike	10.03	opening the office	100	
10					
11					
12	<b>MONTHLY RANKING!</b>				
13		WHO	SUM of POINTS		
14	1st	Adam	380		
15	2nd	John	250		
16	3rd	Mike	150		
17		Grand Total	780		
18					
19					

Figure 12 Example of simple office game in a spreadsheet

The above example consists of 3 key elements:

- a very simple table populated manually by someone holding the 'administrator' role,
- a simplistic points system (different actions have a different values)
- a pivot table below that sums up the values and shows top 3 performers and their scores.

# Case study:

## Who is picking up the trash?

I remember one of the first implementation of such simple office gamification at TDSOFT when we were still a very small company (about 8 people). We made this “office upkeep gamification” to help reduce typical issues like a smelly trashcan on a Monday morning or a dirty coffee machine.

	A	B	C	D
1		January		
2	Anita	10		
3		-wyrzucenie kosza z plastikami		
4	Kamil	10		
5		-stawienictwo w związanie worków ze śmieciami		
6	Sze	10	2	
7		-stawienictwo w pracy przed 8.		
8	Sebastian	-1		
9		wytykanie		
10	Krzysztof	1		
11		stawienictwo 7:59		
12	Adrian	0		
13				
14	Maciej	0		
15				
16	Dariusz	0		
17				
18	Yuri	0		
19				
20	Tetiana	0		
21				
22	Pawel	0		
23				

Figure 13 A very simplistic excel-based gamification system.

It amazed us how some very simple tasks had become a true field of war between some team members who competed to become the 1st place owner by the end of the month.

It had nothing to do with rewards or anything else that could be gained from this. There were no rewards or bonuses for participation. Just the taste of victory was what mattered.

Just measuring what has been done and putting names to ranked places was enough motivation to get hooked.

What helped was that the company had relatively young team and relaxed atmosphere, so there were no bad vibes about “why should I be taking the trash out”. Just making fun of something that we would do anyway.

At that time, you would come in at 8:00 am, before anyone else, to grab your points, just to see 2 colleagues already there, trashcan empty, carpets being vacuumed and coffee machine spotless clean. Nothing left to do.

I strongly encourage you to make such a simple test in your environment, as it is a true eye-opener of how strong competition and leaderboards can be.

## **Personal Leaderboards**

Maybe you don't have an immediate environment to test the true strengths of the leaderboard mechanism, yet still would be willing to feel its power. There is no problem in setting up a leaderboard against yourself!

The only thing you need to change in this setting is - whom you compete against. In the below example I will show you a simple example of ranking board when you just compete against your past self.

This book has been obviously written with help of gamification mechanics to keep me motivated and to transform feeling of “forced work” into a true challenge, that brings sense of joy and accomplishment after each writing session.

Here is an excel list I have done at the very beginning that will help me understand how each writing session correlates to other previous ones. At the time of writing this text, I am still at the beginning, but the ranking looks optimistic!

1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
2	Date	Word count target	% target	% progress	weekly target		
3	21.04.2022	700	1.87	-	0	words per page	250
4	22.04.2022	3318	8.85	6.98	1/15	target num of pages	150
5		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15	words per book	37500
6		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
7		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15	works per week	2500
8		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
9		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
10		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
11		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
12		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
13		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
14		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
15		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
16		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
17		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
18		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
19		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
20		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
21		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
22		3318	8.85	0.00	1/15		
23							
24							

*Figure 14 Example of book writing tracker in spreadsheet*

This spreadsheet allows me to track my performance by date, the “% progress” columns measure the progress against previous sessions, so I can see how the sessions compare to previous ones. Looking at my previous achievements, I feel tempted to match them with each sitting!

When I write, I have this spreadsheet always open. Updating the word count multiple times a day gives me this dopamine boosts that is needed for continuing the action. This gets me somewhat addicted to checking up on the progress. Each time I can see that my current word-count increased my daily page gain, I am feeling pleasure of success. Normally, without this tool, I wouldn't be able to experience this reward so frequently.

## Case study:

### Evolution of personal gamification system to write a book

UPDATE 1 (33% progress). When I am “in the zone”, I am making great progress, and it feels almost too easy. All this because updating the spreadsheet live, provides feeling of reward each time. Every time, I feel like finishing for the day (getting bored), I update the spreadsheet, just to see that I am very close to another “milestone”. This keeps me going. At the same time, I noticed that this sheet could use having some special rewards for “actually starting” implemented. Especially after longer break. It is good to measure and tinker the effects of every gamification you create. It is a constant process that requires observation and empathy, to understand human interactions with the system better.

UPDATE 2 (40% progress) I have noticed that thoughts in my head “how much longer”, so decided to measure it with a simple formula by adding session duration, and how many hours till the end with current (today's) tempo of work.

Date	Word count target	% target	% progress	weekly target	pages	pages gain	session duration (only focus time)	how many hours till the end with current tempo
12.10.2022	13886	37.03	1.17	6/15	55.5	1.8		
13.10.2022	14191	37.84	0.81	6/15	56.8	1.2		
21.10.2022	15185	40.49	2.65	6/15	60.7	4.0	210.0	78.6

Figure 15 Book tracker adjustments added afterwards

in	session duration (only focus time)	how many hours till the end with current tempo
1.8		
1.2		
4.0	210.0	78.6
7.2		

Figure 16 Tracking session duration, and estimated time to finish

I have started using a very small “goals” to help me get started with writing. Yet again, it turns out that the hardest part is starting. Last week, the small “goal” was to add the first scientific reference, this week was to schedule a 4h time slot with full focus for writing. As time of writing this, I have 30 minutes left and feeling of great accomplishment for the day.

Milestone	Reward			
20 pages	brag about writing a book			
30 pages	do a small personal it project - time limit 8h - can be night			
35 pages	do a small personal it project - time limit 8h - can be night			
40 pages before July	make Gamiengine or Gamistream in Remix by myself - time limit 40h			
50 pages	do second project in Remix - time limit 16h			
60 pages	buy something from my wish list			
70 pages				

I am also testing the physical reward for the first time, previous “rewards” for milestones were related mostly to spending time on internal research projects without feeling bad about wasting time that could be better spent.

UPDATE 3 (74% progress) Sheets keeps being the great motivator to add more content. Seems to be doing really well. Even when the book progress is much closer to



completion and edits start to appear more often than insertions (the amount of added words is decreasing).

To help myself, I have added another metric:

	session duration (only focus time)	how many hours till the end with current tempo	how much words left till major goal 130
2	10.0	51.7	
6	15.0	8.4	8258
8	100.0	7.3	5807
2	60.0	9.3	4760

*Figure 17 Tracking against a goals that is a bit closer than full completion*

This allows me to see how many more hour would I have to put in to finish, making the goal “attainable” as the number is not very dramatic. It counts only “full focus” time. At the moment of taking the screenshot it looks like only about 10 hours more are needed. A bit too optimistic! But something I probably need right now!

*UPDATE 4 (86% progress)* It has been over 30 long sessions with a white page in front of me. It became a habit. Starting the work is now easy, and there is always something to add, or to fix. This may be the last update, as even with progress of 86%, I think it is good enough to just go ahead and publish what I have. With this sentence the “major goal of 130 pages of typescript” has been accomplished.

*UPDATE 5 (97% progress)* I keep writing more as I have more and more ideas on how to improve the book. Sometimes I replace whole blocks of text with something better, there is no fear of “not finishing it” anymore, it has been replaced with hope to write a book, that would really

benefit others. I also keep inventing new chapter ideas, that potentially expand the original scope of the size of the book. The main worry now? That I will keep updating it towards no end, and never actually publish.

## **Case study:**

### **The Super Player**

TDSOFT has also created leaderboards and points scoring as part of their internal gamification. They have also added coins that players were getting for leveling up with points. System was linear so with enough work, one could take out a hefty amount of money each month. But would someone go this far really? The answer is yes, and you should be prepared for such cases too.

The SuperPlayer singlehandedly scored more points than the rest of the team. It quickly started to escalate as other team members started to call out on his behavior. On a good day the SuperPlayer were able to log: 2 hours of sport activity, 8 hours of book reading, 2 hours of listening to podcasts and on top of that many other activities: social media sharing, providing feedback, exchanging info about work with others. Literally everything. It wasn't valuable for the company at this point as it many of these were about self-development not content overdose. Unfortunately, most of the time it was correct with the rules. When the team was able to call out the rule violation, the SuperPlayer would change the strategy, obey the new rules but still maximise gains.

To reduce the impact of the SuperPlayer, the team has tightened the rules, created limits, even devalued company

coins, reduced coins earned per point with higher levels, all this helped, but did not solve the issue.

The leaderboard was poisoned. System was not working.

Why play if you will never be able to reach 1st place? Literally even if you try very hard, you can only get 30% of the points of the SuperPlayer?

At the end, the TDSOFT team noticed that making more and more rules made the play only worse for others and user activity was dropping, so finally they asked SuperPlayer to stay off for a couple of months. That worked, and there is a much longer afterthought in the company related to this.

If you are really trying to make a playful experience for your team, you need to make sure to balance the team right, not only by tasks but also by team members. As an administrator you sometimes need to step in. One abuser is enough to spoil the game for everyone and reduce the total business value to near zero.

It was a moral choice, but we feel it was ultimately good, or “less bad”.

If you are faced with choice that has no good answers, banning a player that degrades the experience of others has less consequences than asking the whole team to go around him.

# **Chapter 5.**

## **Our brain is lazy**

# Our brain is lazy

## What does it mean?

Our brain uses significant energy required to process information from various senses in real time. Its size allowed humans to survive and conquer the world, but this comes with a significant cost for the body. This is why there are many automatic biological systems within us, that help to optimize the thinking process.

---

*When thinking about a complex task,  
you are almost turning blind.*

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Do you know that you are turning almost blind when thinking about a complex task? This and many more interesting concepts about our brain behavior can be taken from Daniel Kahneman's books like "*Thinking, Fast and Slow*".

You may very quickly observe how the optimization works by a simple experiment: Start watching a movie that is interesting and fun to you. You will be engaged and focused on it, thinking that you are experiencing everything about it. Now, once you have spent a few minutes watching the movie, mute the volume for a few minutes. What muting the sounds does, is that removes lots of information input from your brain and you can quickly observe that you have started to notice many more visual details in the movie than with the sound turned on... Your brain can see more when you stop listening. Similar process relates to human brain accommodation when some senses are impaired, for

example blind people usually have fantastic hearing, smell, and kinesthetic skills.

Studies have shown that people are seeing what is expected to be seen, rather than real image. Brain simplifies the world for us, to minimize the power consumption. There is a famous Gorilla study (“Selective Attention Test”, Simons & Chabris, 1999) where participants were asked to observe a video and focus on counting the number of passes of ball, but only by team wearing white t-shirts. Most of the observers have not seen a dancing gorilla going around the scene. Moreover, once told, there was a gorilla, many of them couldn’t believe it. When they were told to look again, they were shocked.



*Figure 18 Source: “Selective Attention Test”, Simons & Chabris, 1999*

Proper energy optimization may conclude that the brain is rather smart than ‘lazy’, so why name this chapter in such a way? The problem is that the optimization algorithm is impacting other factors too, factors that we are not aware of, and which may be not welcomed in our lives. Summarizing, this chapter shows the ‘lazy’ part that, although saving energy, works against us.

Imagine a 5-year-old kid that has a craving for some chocolate, obviously parents are resisting as they are aware of health implications of bad diet. They are asking him to finish his dinner first instead. The concept of delayed reward is not very appealing, yet motivation to get the chocolate is high. What typical young kid's brain would suggest? Usually, it would be a quick and easy solution like bursting into tears, and convincing parents that their "tummy is full". If this doesn't work, other solutions might come to his mind like hiding the dinner, giving it to the dog that is sitting under the table or just going to get the chocolate without permission anyway (while speaking out loud "I will get it myself, don't have to listen to you" so you know).

The kid will eventually perform much more actions before getting the 'dessert'. He would have to eat the dinner anyway, and all the energy lost on various levels of negotiation is lost. He just kept believing, there is a short-term solution. It works with the adults too. Our brain prefers short-term solutions over the "correct" solutions. It is not logical, yet very hard to resist. People who are good at it are known for having a "great willpower".

To add more visual examples, let's imagine a more mature situation.

You want to write a book. You know that you are good at writing and an expert on the subject, so it would be just a matter of time! You set goals for yourself, make sure your calendar has room to sit on it for at least 2 hours every day.

- Day one - the brain is not aware of the size of the task, it goes well, you have 4 pages done and even the whole book structure plan seems to be tackled. You even

managed to do all this while sitting properly to not cause strain on your back!

- Day two - you started 15 minutes later, it goes well, but your friend called, and you had to take a break
- Day three - you would have to first acknowledge that day-2 was not a success, so you avoid starting at all.
- Day four - you managed to force yourself to sit on the book and continue... Another 3 pages in.
- Day five - you forgot about the book, something else more important caused this plan to be postponed till you have 'more time'
- Day twenty-five - you had a good day and got back to writing the book. Where did 20 days go?

What was the real issue above? Was that a procrastination issue really? It is not about delaying doing something till the very end. The start was good and on time, but over time as the sheer amount of work connected with the task became apparent, suddenly you just couldn't find enough energy or motivation to continue!

Reading that far into the book, you can now understand that your brain did exactly what it is best at - optimized the experience to make sure it doesn't spend energy where there is no real reward. Avoid hard work at all costs. Focus on short-term gains again "*do I have any chocolate?*".

So, it is not laziness, or procrastination, it is just being smart. Staying lazy as long as possible waiting for better prey to come has been part of animal nature since the beginnings... Look at the lions in TV or zoo - most of the time of their lives, they are just resting and looking around. They are not exercising or doing anything to increase chances of the next



hunt, they are just laying by the tree, or up on a hill, doing nothing, waiting for a good opportunity. Historical data shows that people lived such lifestyle before industrial revolution too. This seems to be the natural state of things. Only recently replaced by the concept of “job”. (A good read about this change provides a book titled “Linchpin: Are you Indispensable?” by Seth Godin)

## **“Linchpin: Are you indispensable” book by Seth Godin**

Linchpin represents a down-to-earth view on how modern workforce is being treated by the corporate business. The process of optimization of goods/services manufacturing has become so advanced, that workforce is less and less needed. The typical worker doesn't have enough knowledge to make difference and is easy to replace. Seth Godin tries to express the need to become someone indispensable, as he claims only people who will break out of this downward spiral, will be able to succeed.

Modern business, that want to grow, innovate, have to look for that kind of people too as without indispensable services, they might find ourselves out of the market, with global competitors taking their place niche by niche.

A great read for someone who tries to find his place as an employee in a modern business, yet feels insecure, easy to replace, easy to change for someone younger, less expensive, or maybe even someone outsourced from a different place.

# Awareness gives advantage

The instinct behind saving the precious energy is ancient and quite simple in its mechanics.

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*We can outplay the 'saving' instinct quite easily,  
just need to avoid plain, boring repetition,  
and make it easy enough.*

---

The good thing though, is that we can outplay it quite easily. We just need to remain active and avoid plain, boring repetition (repetitive tasks are getting almost instant brain optimization, which is, again, very smart!), and make it easy enough. The only things you want to repeat in a similar way every day are things you would like to make a habit of eating sweets might not be the first choice, but a habit to do a 5-minutes house cleanup every morning might just help with the day.

Let's continue the discussion with another example. Imagine you set a goal for yourself to write a book using points system and other motivation techniques. You know that the hardest thing to do is to actually start. Once you are 'in the zone', trying to write down the thought, it starts to go much smoother. Your brain obviously is aware that book writing is a mental exercise and would subconsciously suggest other, more exciting activities or just saving energy. Sometimes it is hard to catch it. For example, lurking through social media, reading very important news on-line, watching video clips with good music (for sure it will help you set a proper mood, wouldn't it?). Fast forward, an hour passed, and you haven't even written a single word, and you

start blaming yourself for procrastinating. From there, things are going downhill, you associate writing with stress and failure and basically stop doing this. The next day you 'forgot' or changed goals.

Now, to compensate that negative perspective with a positive looking solution, here are a few techniques that you could use to 'outplay' your brain and make it seem exciting and rewarding to continue writing the book:

- **Have very small daily goals.** Literally a goal that can be done within 5 minutes, like - write 2 sentences, suggest a new chapter title, do some formatting fixes. Remember that doing things every day, even for a short time, creates a habit, it literally rewires your brain.
- **Create an easy-to-use reward system that is available to use after small goals are reached** (so that it would seem for the brain that the easiest solution to get that reward would be to just do a little bit of extra work). It doesn't have to be physical. It could be the satisfaction of checking a checkbox in an excel spreadsheet and seeing some numbers grow. Or maybe if you are experiencing ADD symptoms, having a break to walk around the room after each tiny milestone would work.
- **Reward yourself randomly** - for example: take a break before you are meant to finish (leaving work with unfinished part will greatly support the start on the next day), get a nice cup of your favorite coffee after some milestone is hit (writing one full page this day?). Treat yourself with a lot of compassion and care, like you would treat someone who you love and

really care about. Someone who struggles with achieving goals, so every small step counts.

- **Reward consecutive streaks** - so that from time to time, the bigger reward would seem alluring to work even more than originally thought. A “booster reward”. It could be something bigger like after 3 days with consecutive progress, you allow yourself to buy some hobby item, or a good book to read. Something that you want to do anyway. Something that maybe you don't have time for or had to push off down your priorities list. It is also fitting strongly the “self-compassion” route that is very beneficial for helping yourself achieve great things.
- **Reward objective gains** - for example hitting word count milestones. Each 1000 words you can let yourself recalculate the estimated completion date (visible outcome showing progress made). It is good to have at least 3,4 different measures at the same time. It could be hitting every 1000 words limit, hitting new page, making 1% of progress.

The ideal scenario would be where there is always one measure that is very close, and a few others a bit further away. Always chasing something that is “almost there” will split the huge task into a series of “almost there” wins.

- **Observe progress as often as possible** - Our mind tends to being quite critical to things it sees. It is another natural consequence of evolution. Brain is wired for looking for problems, issues, dangers, things that are not right and need to be fixed.

The problem with this approach is that, when working on a big goal over long time, these negative thoughts start building up quickly, and there is no natural compensation mechanism. This leads to motivation decrease.

A simple trick of measuring and updating your own progress will keep giving this positive feedback. Even recalculating your path to target by 0.001% means progress and this is positive. Over time you will quickly notice that you become almost addicted to updating the progress very frequently, just to have this dose of good mood.

- **Consider rewarding comebacks after a longer pause** - it may happen that you would have to skip a day, or a few days. The trigger to get back to work routine needs to be a little stronger than the daily 'habitual' one. Let's say, it is purchasing a new gear that would help you focus - a lamp, headphones or something else that would change your environment just a tiny bit. It could be even moving your desk to a different place - should create enough sense of freshness for the brain to be more excited than tired when thinking about restarting the writing challenge.

## Practical example

As seen above, the tricks that can be used to motivate the brain and get past the 'lazy' part of the brain are quite simple. We often forget about it in our lives, treat ourselves almost like robots, which is really hurting. It creates a society full of people that are disciplined, strict and constantly

unhappy, plotted into their own fight with laziness, ‘trying to achieve something’.

The outcome of this chapter is about actually providing enough stimulus to make work fun and playable. The cost is minimal or zero, so why not?

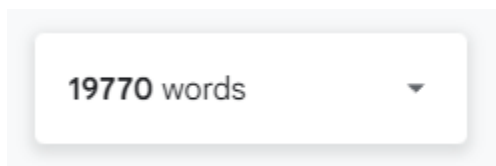
Below example shows the real-life framework used to motivate myself to continue writing this book:

2										
	Date	Word count target	% target	% progress	weekly target	pages	pages gain	session duration (only focus time)	how many hours till the end with current tempo	
17	25.10.2022	16512	44.03	2.71	7/15	66.0	4.1	120.0	41.3	
18	22.11.2022	19102	50.94	6.91	8/15	76.4	10.4	180.0	21.3	
19	23.11.2022	19463	51.90	0.96	8/15	77.9	1.4	20.0	16.7	
20	24.11.2022	21251	56.67	4.77	9/15	85.0	7.2			
21		27500	73.33	16.66	11/15	110.0	25.0			

*Figure 19 Spreadsheet book writing tracker example*

A simple excel sheet where I just update the “Word count target” column, and each update I can see the “pages gain” number go up.

I keep the word count matter in my document always open, to have quick access to my progress measure:



*Figure 20 Word counter accessible in every word processor*

The update of word count happens very frequently, I do this multiple times per each writing session. It allows me to relax my brain for a minute and fill that space with sense of progress, so I can keep being motivated to continue.

What I have noticed is these “stops” a very short attention regression are the major cause of leaving the session, “calling it a day”, so being able to go back to writing (through above trick) after a short break is a key thing to deliver more.

Occasionally, when feeling extra tired, I also update the “session duration” to see how many more “hours” I still have to commit, instead of just pages, just to see the light at the end of the tunnel. That number is statistically shrinking too, so over time it allows me to see another point of progress.

Other metrics like “% pages”, “pages”, “% target” help me figure out mental milestones. Exceeding 50% target was very exciting, but once reached, another big number 60% seemed a bit too far, so I focused on pages as the number approached 80 very soon “would be good to reach it today”. Being able to shift attention into another marker of success that is “close enough” is a great cheat to allows the brain to feel the reward is just around the corner.

Each “writing session” is a new row in the spreadsheet, so occasionally I can go back and reflect on how much effort has been committed so far, so my naturally occurring negative thoughts about “putting myself in senseless task again” are balanced by a sense of accomplishment.

All this is supported by a very simple reward system:

Milestone	Reward				
20 pages	brag about writing a book				
30 pages	do a small personal it project - time limit 8h - can be night				
35 pages	do a small personal it project - time limit 8h - can be night				
40 pages before July	make Gamiengine or Gamistream in Remix by myself - time limit 40h				
50 pages	do second project in Remix - time limit 16h				
60 pages	buy something from my wish list				
70 pages	rewrite personal blog to remix stack 16h				
75 pages	start publicing part of the book broader, ask for feedback				
90 pages					
100 pages					
110 pages					

*Figure 21 Simple milestone-based reward system for book writing gamification*

That I just update occasionally to let myself experience feeling of bigger accomplishment once in a while.



# **Chapter 6.**

## **The game of leadership**

# **We have an issue**

We have an issue. The world is spinning faster now than ever before, in sense of amount of information and transactions exchanged. Society is changing rapidly with a new generation of people over-saturated with impulses from social media and modern marketing. People who are accustomed to receiving “pings” on their phones every few minutes. They live differently and think differently. Managers are just a few years older, but the gap is already huge.

Even if we would put managers of the same age to face the issue, the issue becomes even larger. Not only they don’t have the knowledge to properly build the team and motivate this team for achieving of common goals, but also, they can’t understand why they seem to be lacking the motivation themselves and are so easily giving up, “burning out”.

The issue of a rapidly changing world is one that affects every industry, with technology advancing and people growing accustomed to instant gratification, it can be difficult to keep up. For managers, the challenge is especially difficult as they may not be as familiar with the new generation of employees and the new tools and technology that they use. This can lead to an inability to properly build and motivate a team, and even to a lack of motivation from the manager themselves.

To address this issue, managers need to be willing to learn and stay up to date on the latest trends in their industry. They should also strive to create an environment where employees can feel comfortable expressing their ideas and opinions and be receptive to feedback. Additionally, managers should make sure to create a culture of

collaboration, where employees are encouraged to work together to find solutions and come up with creative ideas. Finally, managers should make sure to stay engaged with their team, providing support, guidance, and rewards when appropriate. By doing so, managers can ensure that their teams have the necessary tools and motivation to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

Last 2 decades were mind-transforming, and there is no going back. Leaders need efficient tools and techniques to cope with the new generation of employees, otherwise trends of lowering loyalty and engagement would continue to spread across more and more people.

The same goes for the new generation of customers. They are consuming huge amounts of content daily, and rarely even look twice at the same product or service, which means old advertisement techniques that build brand recognition by just placing the ad everywhere - can potentially do more harm than good. A good-looking product with new features might not be enough to steer people away from consuming 'fun' content. Might not be enough for them to make a purchase decision. Moreover, chances are it will just get filtered out of their perception.

Gamification-based strategies can become a medium that could connect both worlds together, it could mimic systems that new generations experience from their early childhood so that they could find themselves more accustomed to the world they are more familiar with. Gamification also does not spoil the fun for the 'older' people, they might seem reluctant to admit it at first, but the techniques used by behavioral psychology will work.

Obviously, gamification won't solve all of the marketing or product-placement problems. What this book discusses is that it should be considered and the importance of gamified system around us is growing. As a manager, you get to decide on your long-term strategy.

## **Remote leadership**

Remote work has been growing in popularity over the past decades. Never stopping evolution IT tools allowed people to have more freedom on how they work and where they work. Recent Covid-19 pandemic that managed to almost put the whole world to a full stop for a moment, irreversibly changed how we perceive the value of work done from home. During Covid-19 employers were forced to conduct massive adaptation of remote work policies. Suddenly nearly every office worker was allowed to conduct his duties from home. Even teachers were forced to test the performance of remote teaching - which, I heard, did not turn out to be a positive experience.

After Covid-19 pandemics, workers seem to be very reluctant to come back to the office. A recent study by the American Psychological Association found that 67% of remote workers surveyed said they are reluctant to return to the office when asked about their post-pandemic plans.

Research has demonstrated that companies which implemented a mandatory work from office policy experienced a high rate of employee resignations. One study found that when employees were suddenly required to attend the workplace despite their preference to work remotely, nearly one-third of them chose to leave the company (Bardwell and Bauman, 2020). Additionally,

another study found that employees who did not have the option to work remotely reported a higher level of stress and dissatisfaction with their job (Van der Veen et al., 2021).

These findings suggest that companies should be more flexible with their work from office policies in order to avoid mass resignations. Modern leaders need to have new tools that allow them to manage people and motivate them towards achieving common goals. Obviously, there are multiple tools used already: online meetings, team communicators, project management software.

The problem with current tools, is that it doesn't help with shortening distance of leadership. Online meetings can help, but how many company-wide online meetings can happen?

With Gamification systems properly implemented, managers can transfer their company goals down to employees through a series of tasks and activities that they can reward. Gamification can also sort out the issue of appreciation of the best performing employees (through leaderboards mentioned previously). On top of that, it can create common goals (like mentioned earlier charity case) that allow the team to work towards something good together.

## **Gamification can set standards that managers will follow**

Managers, business owners are just people, wanting to do good, provide such work organization that brings the company to success. Everyone has its own style, experience, mentality, character. Some managers are true

leaders, who achieve great results, they are rare to find, but incredibly valuable. Most of the managers are ordinary people like me & you, just trying to do good, but nobody is perfect, right?

In a small organization, the difference between finding a good manager and a mediocre one might be between life and death of the company. Each new 'try' to onboard a new manager is a serious risk to consider. In bigger companies, things are always way slower, bad managers are often 'pushed out', which means usually promoted somewhere else. This creates a long-term cost for the company culture, which could become spoiled from the top.

Management standardization is already taking place through agile methodologies, LEAN, Six Sigma and other frameworks and certifications. In great simplification, it prepares managers to be efficient and make good decisions they face, but it is incredibly hard to create a right set of often 'niche' training on how to be a good manager in exactly one industry the company operates in - experienced people are worth more than their weight in gold. For example, a company that produces bottled water has a completely different way of working than a company that owns a chain of bakery stores. Each new, well educated, personnel have to spend many months, if not years, to really learn the craft and understand the business in full.

**Gamification in business can help you build a universal standard of what is expected and good for the company at any scale.**

You can define specific rules that mimic the way your business operates. For example, employees who work on the production line of water meters can have extra points for

each day all of their work has passed the quality control test, or each time they suggest production line improvement that will be good enough to be discussed during the board meeting. Rules once set, can be spread across many different teams and their management, putting a standard to what that one thing a company really wants to pay for.

## **Games are getting more important than ever**

Leaders should not forget about changes in society that are directly affecting their team. As time passes, their team age distribution would shift, and the 'younger generation' representation will grow. This means that not implementing any 'cool' concepts of direct and daily engagement could mean losing good employees over other companies who can offer higher wages, nicer offices, or better perks, or being there first with a great gamified work experience.

One of the big challenges of leadership is keeping good people within the company, not letting them go away to competition. There are always better opportunities, but people would stay loyal (to some extent) if they are feeling noticed, valued, and appreciated. If they feel that they are growing in your company and eventual pay increase will one day come with the performance review.

Your team needs a clear route to success within the organization - this is the biggest part of 'leadership' in team management. The Manager may not be able to negotiate pay rises for everyone in the team, but yes, he can make his team stand out and become noticed, he can also make work and adventure and challenge that the team solves together.

He can create environment, where people feel like a part of the team, instead of separate individuals - even when they work remotely.

The younger generation you would end up working with, the more the concept of work as a challenge-driven game would be apparent as the one that has the living traction and understanding in your team.

## **The massive importance of showing the right path**

Modern management not only has to lead team of younger generations that are adopted to different ways of interaction as mentioned above. Another very important side of it is true life leadership. Not only people are taught to react to constant gratification through new media, but also, they are left alone in the middle of neurotic chaos of constant impulses. These impulses oversaturate them and block the ability to create patterns or actions that come from the inside and could provide a meaning to their life. Instead, they are conditioned into processing only shallow, empty, quick emotions. Day filled with hundreds of sessions of watching videos of other people and their lifestyle leaves no place for sense of being oneself.

**Be prepared that the modern, young audience would have no clue about what they want to do with their life.**

The growing number of unbearable feelings of emptiness and lack of sense corresponds with shocking waves of mental illnesses growth in the western countries. A 2018 study by the University of Zurich found that individuals reporting higher levels of meaninglessness in life were more



likely to experience symptoms of depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts<sup>xxix</sup>. Similarly, a 2019 study conducted by the University College London found that people who reported lower levels of “purpose in life” had higher risks for psychological distress<sup>xxx</sup>.

As a leader you want to help them, but it is not easy to show the first steps to someone who never had a chance to properly self-reflect. Gamification can help you deliver it with ease. Mix work-related tasks with mindfulness practice, sports activity tracking, yoga, consume valuable content (books, podcasts). Practical examples are discussed in Chapter 10.

With proper tools, you may be able to turn someone’s life around without even asking him to do it. This is the true power of understanding behavioral psychology and owning the tools that can leverage its possibilities.

## **Case study:**

### **“The Growth Club”**

TDSOFT is actively exercising different gamification methods to engage and motivate the team towards achieving common goals. One of the recent experiments was the institution of self-help group.

The Growth Club was based on a weekly meeting within a circle of volunteers who wanted to achieve ‘something’ in their life. Being able to speak about your life experience, struggles and emotions is one thing, being heard, truly heard by the group is another level of experiencing a social life.

Just a group of 5 or 6 started, perfect for keeping good intimacy of the meeting.

At the end of each meeting, everyone was picking just one thing they want to achieve by the next meeting. So, there was only promise made in front of the group. If they won't deliver that's ok, no punishment, we just try as a group.

The gamification process there introduced, was very simple but also extremely powerful. If all of members met their weekly goal, everyone scores points. And this is the part where information goes public.

Clear statement from the company that it values small wins on the path of self-growth. This is a bigger message than just management, more than leadership.

This is example of truly supporting social circle led by workplace.

# **Chapter 7.**

## **Rules instead of orders**

# Why not orders?

When you are holding a manager role, or when you are responsible for actions of other people in any other way, it is very normal for you to really feel obligated to ensure things that are being done by these people are done correctly.

Each time you notice something off, you react (well, that is your job, isn't it?). To efficiently manage, you react by using one of many techniques to communicate your way of thinking and suggest doing things differently. At the end of the day, all you want is to make sure that someone will stop doing things that seem wrong or start doing something in a 'right way'.

By trying to directly control other people behavior, you always achieve some success, that is proportional to some luck, motivation, and your interpersonal skills. The problem is that the success is very short term. If your team is used to having orders, they will wait for an order in the moment of doubt. Their willingness to do right will backfire at you each time you won't be there to provide further instructions - then in doubt.

It is easy to fall into trap of training a dedicated, loyal, and hard-working team that would still need constant correction, or at least repetition of similar orders and instructions over time. And this is effect of 'good' management, that is open, friendly, and supportive.

So, what's really wrong with giving orders? They don't work as intended and are an ongoing cost for you as a manager as you must repeat them and repeat and check and verify and keep watching.

Orders, create boundaries that are invisible, but can cost a fortune.

## Why rules are better

Let's first establish what 'rules' mean in this book.

**Rules in this book are defined as a set of written clear success metrics and limitations that when all satisfied. immediately trigger the reward system.**

*Ok, what's the 'reward system' then?* It is set of actions that happen *immediately* after rules conditions are met, it can be an employee handshake, noticing your child good behavior, a monthly bonus promise, letting your staff go home early, or even things simple (and often rare!) like saying an honest compliment to your spouse.

*Ok, last question, why immediately?* This is what our brains need to feel the direct connection between an effort and reward. Our brains don't like spending energy, so when they 'invest' it should better pay off quickly! Rewards were discussed in Chapter 2.

Understanding this basic concept will allow us to leverage our potential as human beings into potentially making great things. This behavioral pattern has a dark side too, the gaming industry is leveraging it to a point of senseless addiction that unfortunately affects many lives.

# Why does this book state that rules are better than orders?

When we are given a task to do (an order) we want to do this as quickly and as easily as possible. We would do the minimum to reach the goal (unless we have some sort of compulsive behavior disorder that is forcing us to do everything perfectly).

When you define an order, you ask for exact action “do this”, this doesn’t give much room for negotiation. The best and cheapest alternative to doing the task might be only *not doing it* or *pretending* that we are doing it. We are losing the ingenious, almost magical feature of our brain to optimize our work and use less energy in everything we do. This creates tension as you - as a manager - have other means of motivation and you would not be so easy on the order not being fully actioned “let me handle this myself, it will be quicker/better”.

When you define rules, you leave boundaries of actions that your people can move within, optimize for the best outcome for themselves. If you resign from telling people what exactly to do, you also force yourself to think differently, for example you start talking about goals, not about certain actions. “We need to deliver the food within 10 minutes!” (Looks like a goal but it is an order in disguise!) changes into “Serving food within 10 minutes gives us about 50% more tips!” (This is proper execution of a rule introduction, even though it has a different form, the *50% more tips* actually is the part that makes it real, as good rule should have a real immediate reward at its end)

To sum up, the one thing to remember is that order is not very negotiable, and our brain loves to negotiate. It is very cautious on where to spend its energy. It helps you; it makes things go smoother and easier, but you need to put the brain in the right environment to show its true potential. When you set rules, you create a space of actions that everyone can move within and provide their best low-effort high-reward delivery!

## **Real-life examples of using gamification rules**

Let's move into some real-life examples that would help us to better understand how we can manage through rules.

Let's say there is a case of a manager of a small car workshop. Multiple different kinds of tasks, many customers with special queries, small teams, half of the projects has a new non-typical issue to solve, you try to stay afloat while providing reasonable prices, and keep costs under control at the same time.

Customers are often complaining about prices or quality of the service and employees are pushing him to increase their salaries, while the work efficiency has stagnated.

Let's maybe add some employee turnover rate - as they learn the craft they tend to resign and start their own business - taking a few customers with them, that forces him to constantly employ and train people, and never lets you settle down. The marketing spend is an endless barrel too.

To make this a little bit more complex, let's introduce some issues with paperwork being in total chaos, accountants

calling for explanations, taxes coming up higher than expected.

The picture above may seem chaotic but shows a typical scenario where there are no smart rules set, or the ones set are working against the business case. Rules could be set as boundary to operate within every angle, to motivate all parties involved into creating a more efficient company.

Let's start with the customer:

- The owner could provide package deals to satisfy customers need to get a good, promotional price and his need to have more standard jobs that are more predictable. Engine oil maintenance is usually more predictable than random electrical issue, it doesn't require a high level of skills.

Such arrangements, 'service packages', already happen in a lot of places. Rule is simple: if the customer takes those 3 services from the service at one go, he is going to be immediately awarded with a special price.

Owner can also introduce this package after customer has paid for the 1st service, telling him that it is only 2 to left to lock in a better deal. It adds 'surprise' effects, research has shown that customer surprise can lead to increased customer loyalty. For example, a study published in the International Journal of Bank Marketing found that positively received surprises led to customer loyalty, measured by customers' intention to continue their relationship with the bank<sup>xxx</sup>.



Now employees:

- Owner could put a white board inside the workshop. Draw names of team members on it and leave in a place where they can write down the value of their finished jobs each day. The first reward is recognition. Employees can see themselves as being better than others and it is immediate - the effect of competition is very strong, but be aware that for it to be fair, they need to have the same access to customers/jobs. Owner can back it up with some sort of random reward system - for example the one who wins the day gets a \$100 bonus if total work output exceeds \$4000 (assuming it is a big number) and the whole staff can go home early. When rewarding employees, it is important to understand that they are here mainly for money, same as him and that there is nothing bad about it, so if the rules are fair, he shouldn't hesitate to hand out bonuses.

Now about the owner:

- All those papers, income, costs, invoices, taxes. The pile keeps getting bigger, and he is sure that he could pay much lower taxes if he would just count them all and send to accountants. To fight with the procrastination, he could split the task into number of smaller accomplishments. For example, he could set a rule to fix at least one invoice in the morning when the shop is still empty, and he has time to focus.

Concluding:

- Customer may get a surprise, recognition, positive experience
- Employee may get recognition, fair bonuses system, competition
- Owner gets motivated team, easier sales process, focused time for proper accounting

Thinking about innovative ways to make some rules and gamify your business experience can be a real fun. Within small team sizes the system could be placed in the white board clearly demonstrated in the office, but with the team size and amount of rules growing, finding a good tool for the job may save lots of time.

## **Case study:**

### **“Blink twice if gamification made you do it!”**

TDSOFT is actively exercising different gamification methods to engage and motivate the team towards achieving common goals. One of them is social media outreach. The system was quite simple, for every like you get points, for every comment you get more points. Obviously comments matter more than normal likes. Using this technique allowed the company to get some proper social boosts and increase the outreach of HR campaigns reducing the cost of recruitment by a significant factor.

Months have passed and the management got feedback from one of the players that the system is not functioning in a perfect way. People would respond with *any* comment just to be eligible for points which started to look kind of funny.

Posts like “wow super team” or “cool” or others alike started vibrating with a bit of a weird note. Someone might think that the team is participating in some sort of weird cult or was somehow forced.

Not necessarily a big problem, but maybe a lack of balance. The solution to this was to add a couple of limitations to the game so that commenting on anything on social media posts would stop looking like a great points-mining niche. It is important to observe the results of gamification and tinker it regularly to avoid over-delivery in areas that are not bringing measurable added value to the organization.

## **Should we inspire or observe?**

Business Gamification is a lot about displaying in front of the user his progress in real time. But is there any psychological scientific proof that would back just this feature as a driver of people's behavior?

A good manager wants to empower, motivate, even inspire his colleagues. A good marketing buys customer loyalty, not only their short-term purchase decisions. But is the inspiration provided or the loyalty the target that allows these achievements? Or are they mostly a byproduct of something else?

On another note, there is a big market of motivational speakers, people who can transmit strong emotions through their voice that would put you in a very special mindset, in which you are willing to commit to achieving your goals more, or even feel the urge to start now.

This motivation (or let's call it "inspiration") tends to be short-term, though. Otherwise, why people would keep repeating the same course, video, book? They give a short-term boost, sometimes it is enough to make a big change in life, but the vast majority of people would just go back to their old normal later.

Someone might say that it is overstatement, and those people who are life coaches, or motivational speakers do a lot more good than anyone else, influencing positively millions of people. No doubt, but they tend to keep repeating their material too. Just like without constant repetition, the show would stop eventually. Also, there is a lot about natural talents in this profession - something that is not very applicable into practical business use.

## **Motivation is not enough**

People can feel motivated, it is a specific state of mind. Like someone would put new set of batteries in them, but they would eventually run out of energy, ending the boost. The risk of old habits kicking in again, is very large.

Motivation can be draining emotionally if repeated too often, as our nervous system has to cope with the other side of the equation, tiredness, lack of effect, lack of success, boredom, need to rest, or maybe even feeling of being dishonest to oneself.

There are many videos of sports coaches pumping their teams during the mid-match break to squeeze every extra energy from them to eventually win the match. These people are well known and looked up to, but can they win the whole tournament like this?

## Observation drives action

What makes people act in the gamification mechanisms is based on their ability to “find themselves” in a clearly visible map, see exactly where they are and where to aim.

“The map” must be inviting so it needs to be positive, show progress, show how far you’ve reached so far.

The sole fact of observing one’s progress and one’s position against others is enough to motivate for action. The more energy has been put into the field, the more motivated the user is to continue. Top 20% of players would usually gather 80% of points, not because they are so much better, but the true play starts once you are properly engaged and challenged. Once you are willing to get somewhere.

We seem to often miss that as “demanding” results is way easier for our not always compassionate ego (even not always compassionate for ourselves), but if you ever had a puppy dog at home, then you probably know that shouting is not the method of potty training. What you would want to do is to let the dog outside frequently and very eagerly notice the good behavior.

Observation, noticing the good behavior plus a little reward is all it takes.

## ***“Atomic Habits”***

### **book by James Clear**

You cannot go forward if you don't see where you are.

The actual top performing sports coaches measure each team member's capacity and work towards increasing their results by a measurable but continuous progress. If a player scores 40% of shots in average game, the goal for him is to hit 41% consistently, not 50%. Measurable progress in every dimension each season.

This is what has the famous Laker's coach Pat Riley has done.

The result? He created the best team around and they won not one but two consecutive NBA championships.

This and more stories about properly building new habits can be found in a bestseller book *“Atomic Habits”* by James Clear.

# **Chapter 8.**

## **Personal gamification**

# Introduction

Personal gamification is not directly connected with business, but it is worth discussing. Someone who is responsible for gamification mechanics whether office gamification or marketing solutions, needs to fully understand the psychological mechanics that sits behind it. Best way to learn is to experience, therefore introducing some level of personal gamification is advised to anyone who wants to become an expert and be more efficient in his professional actions.

## **“How to succeed in life without effort?”**

So-called “self-help” books are often climbing to the top of the bookstore rankings, they sell in huge quantities. One of the typical features is that they have very catchy titles, often starting with: “How to...”. They also have great description at the back that tells the reader the kinds of problems he might have that the book will help to resolve. What is also quite common is that each one of them would provide its own thesis that will allow you to become someone better, more successful, and stronger. There is nothing wrong in reading self-help books from time to time. For sure they do help in getting at least short-term motivation for their readers to change some things in life or at least start doing some things differently.

But can gamification serve as a personal tool to achieve some life goals more easily? For sure, yes, but it requires some degree of ability to self-reflect, which might be not a very common skill. Gamification can greatly help in the



process of making good habits and removing negative feelings that are associated in our brain the moment we think about “hard work”, or a “big challenge”.

Key elements of personal Gamification that can be used are:

- **clear goal visibility** - it must be obvious and upfront what the goal is.
- **Small steps compound into long journey** - once we set the goal, it is very important to not hesitate into splitting the effort into small steps, as small as possible. The hardest point of doing something, is always starting it. Regularly starting it day by day. If the goal for a day is to write a chapter of a book, it becomes overwhelming, if the goal is to at least write one sentence, the magic can happen. Turns out writing the second sentence is multiple times less difficult than the first one.
- **regular progress tracking** - even small action forward counts. Every tiny progress should at least reward the eyes with a quick progress note or target update - it becomes a substitute of leader-board for group challenges.

2	Date	Word count target	% target	% progress	weekly target	pages	pages gain
3	21.04.2022	700	1.87	-		0	2.8
4	22.04.2022	3609	9.62	7.76	1/15	14.4	11.6
5	11.05.2022	5831	15.55	5.93	2/15	23.3	8.9
6	03.06.2022	6762	18.03	2.48	3/15	27.0	3.7
7	15.06.2022	7458	19.89	1.86	3/15	29.8	2.8
8	16.06.2022	7841	20.91	1.02	3/15	31.4	1.5
9	23.06.2022	8048	21.46	0.55	3/15	32.2	0.8
10	26.06.2022	10078	26.87	5.41	4/15	40.3	8.1

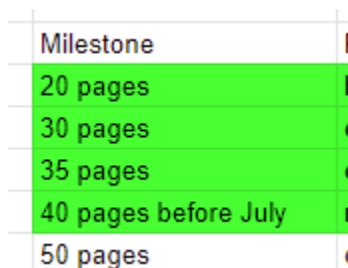
*Figure 22 Every "word count" update recalculates other measures, showing progress in multiple areas at once*

Writing a book is a typical example of a serious commitment. Tracking it regularly gives you sense or

progress, even if you can't imagine the end of it yet because it seems so far to even think about it.

Measuring multiple factors at once - like in this example above, provides many mental anchors regarding the progress. It can be percentage towards completion, weekly target delivery, number of pages written today, number of words written today, even minutes spent writing. Everything that gives the rewarding feeling of accomplishment counts.

- **milestones and rewards** set your milestones dynamically, they should be close enough for you to have a feeling of making a “good deal” on completing them.



Milestone
20 pages
30 pages
35 pages
40 pages before July
50 pages

*Figure 23 Milestones provide a simple way to split big task into series of smaller but noticeable accomplishments*

Milestones can be set dynamically, adjusted during work. They shouldn't be too strict, as it may show as “struggle” within brain, and we don't want that. Change them and try to make sure that motivation doesn't wear off. If you are still not feeling like continuing this big task you planned, consider completely changing the milestone reward, or just bringing it a bit closer - the most important thing is to

continue the task, even if the price is to treat yourself a bit too often for a period of time.

- **social interactions** - inform your peers about your progress after you made some. This will create a positive picture in your brain between doing the actual work and being able to be proud of it. Another take is that public statement is a very powerful tool for triggering the “risk averse” part of our brain that wants to keep the good image of oneself within the society.
- **look at yourself with compassion** - personal goals would never take the priority in our lives, so anything external that affects us: family, health, work, weather, technical issues, will obviously delay the plans. Any self-oriented negative thoughts regarding progress would be demotivating. Remembering to look at yourself with a lot of compassion, will help you get over the bumps on the road, get back to work after long break without hassle. While writing this book, I noticed breaks of almost 1 full month between writing sessions, but that wasn't a problem. What was important was all the progress, even smallest, I managed to make. Only progress should count and for that you should praise and reward yourself once that happens. When there is no progress, just accept it. You are still in a better place than before even starting.
- **Help your future self to start** - the effort imagined in our brain before starting the work again should be as minimal as possible, as otherwise our (as we know very smart!) brain will find a good excuse to abandon the strategy. When writing a book, finish

mid-sentence so you have an easy spot to go back to. When exercising, prepare clothes, shoes and towel for tomorrow. When studying for exam, stop learning during the interesting chapter, not the one that seemed particularly boring.

## **Case study:**

### **A project not possible to fail**

Inspired by what has been happening at TDSOFT, and from my internal will to share inspiration with other people, I decided to write a book. A typical book consists of about 250 pages. This translates into about 150 pages of A4 text with 250 words per page. 37500 words to write. Three times the size of my master thesis (and that was already really exhausting and took months of effort!).

Did I signed up for a task too big to complete? Don't know the exact stats, but I think that most book writers never finish their first book, and we will never get to know them, so it would be even hard to measure. Do you know someone who "started writing a book?". So much knowledge, culture and ideas could be shared if we would have a little bit more motivation, or better tools, or maybe if we would just understood better the mechanisms behind motivation.

But my plan wasn't about bumping motivation but providing ultimate proof of gamification process working on myself through committing to quite a big challenge.

As the company tested OGAMIFY, its own Gamification product on itself, I wanted to test my techniques on myself. The end product is here.

You can see for yourself now if it was worth it or not.

## **Freedom of self-authoring**

Compared to any other applied business implementations of gamification, the personal gamification does not have any limitations, goals set by someone else, or group interaction that could drive your concept off the original plan.

Personal gamification is about you, and it is the only place where you can honestly notice your own needs, wants, goals, fears. Everything you want to change, improve or get rid of in life.

If you are going through any self-authoring programs led by motivational book or speakers, coach, you may notice that building good habits in life and starting small is a common connection between many of these materials. You have the knowledge now to be able to understand how our brain leans towards failure when it sees a big effort for reward. How the reward really must be worth it and more tempting than any else short-term gratification. You are also aware that there is nothing wrong with this. It just implies that chances are you won't be able to make the "radical change in your life", but you could do a number of small wins.

You still want to aim big though, and there is nothing wrong about it. You can then use the knowledge learned here to split the big challenge into tiny progress markers and track it in positive-only way.

A typical simple example of a "self-growth" template might look like this:

	A	B	C	D	E
1					
2	Was there at least a tiny progress in these areas?		2		3
3			DATE->	18.10	29.10
4	read a book everyday (diet, good habits)		2		0
5	listened to uplifting podcasts		2		1
6	been consciously warm and open to other people		3		2
7			SCORE->	3/3	3/3
8	Were I able to observe at least small effects of change in my life?				
9	feeling of accomplishment?		1		0
10	having a good mood?		2		1
11	other people smiling to me more often?		5		2
12	felt lower urge to grab a snack at night?		1		1
13	SUMA		4/4		3/4
	komentarz		The day was good. I noticed this and that. Something else has changed		Another interesting day, this time I noticed this and that

Figure 24 Example of personal tracker in spreadsheets

Where the first column represents the list of actions you want to make habits of and results you want to observe (remember the previous chapter about the importance of observation in motivation?).

1		
2	Was there at least a tiny progress in these areas?	
3		DATE->
4	read a book everyday (diet, good habits)	2
5	listened to uplifting podcasts	2
6	been consciously warm and open to other people	3
7		SCORE ->
8	Were I able to observe at least small effects of change in my life?	
9	feeling of accomplishment?	1
10	having a good mood?	2
11	other people smiling to me more often?	5
12	felt lower urge to grab a snack at night?	1
13		SCORE ->
	The points system: 0 - means nothing significant, just nothing, forget about it 1 - there is a noticeable progress that I am happy to see 2 - there was a breakthrough that I am really proud about	

Figure 25 Personal tracker could be split into columns with habits and positive outcome observations, making it always "easy to look at". No room for negativity.

The columns on the right are just daily logs of your tiny progress markers in each of the areas. The rules are up to

you, you don't have to update it daily, maybe once every few days during slow moments.

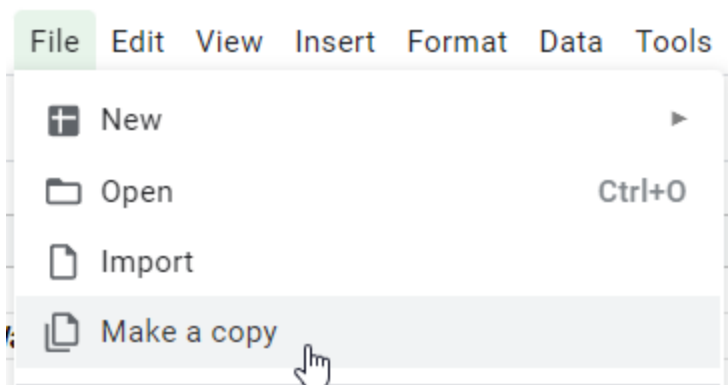
Below each "progress entry", there is also a place for a short diary, just so you can remind yourself after a few months the path you have been through. We tend to see clearly current obstacles in life, but forget easily how far we have gone so far, so keeping a diary/blog can be a great tool to remember the good moments, milestones, progress marks, struggles.

B	C	D	E	F	
		<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	
	<b>DATE-&gt;</b>	18.10	29.10	05.11	
	2		0	2	0
	2		1	1	0
	3		2	0	1
	<b>SCORE -&gt;</b>	3/3	3/3	1/3	
	1		0	1	0
	2		1	1	0
	5		2	1	2
	1		1	0	0
	<b>SCORE -&gt;</b>	4/4	3/4	2/4	
		The day was good, I noticed this and that. Something else has changed	Another interesting day, this time I noticed this and that	A bit slower week, I was tired, needed to rest. Maybe tomorrow will be better.	

*Figure 26 Simplified scoring system allows to show the progress and forget about the weaker days*

You can create obviously your own template that better suits your needs. You can also copy the template above from here: <https://dariusztarczynski.com/excel-templates>

To use the template, just make your own copy and save it:



*Figure 27 Making a copy of a template sheet in Google Sheets product*

The does a couple of interesting things that should help:

- It shows you where you are actually progressing, and which parts of self-development seem still untouched
- It allows you to add personal note after each day, it is important to better keep track of small wins that are easily forgotten
- It shows you areas in which you have excelled, areas that might be just better suited for you
- It can be shared with someone you trust, so this person can motivate you, help you achieve your goals
- It gives you this guilt-free option to state that there wasn't really much progress by just placing "0" in points. There are no negative numbers.
- The 0,1,2 metrics does not leave room for too much self-criticism - it is either not moving forward, or moving forward, or a breakthrough. No "not good enough" rhetoric or self-shaming.



My list looks like this after 2 months:

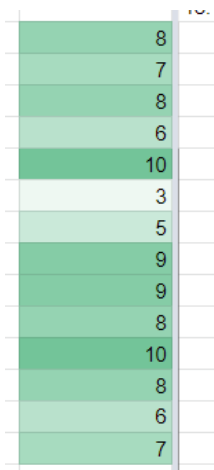


Figure 28 Example summary of points gathered across every habit and outcome, that shows strong areas and areas that need further attention.

Introduction of this simple scoring system that gives 0 points for nothing, 1 point for a visible improvement and 2 points for a big progress, quickly showed me areas where I am really improving (maybe also areas that are the most important for me in life?), and areas that seem to be not really progressing (maybe worth rethinking?).

This is how your diary after each record may look like:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61</																																							

The value coming from taking regular notes will grow with time and build sense of accomplishment that might be really needed during more difficult days that everyone has.

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# **Chapter 9.**

## **In-play gamification tips**

# **Gamification is experimental**

The general rule regarding the in-play adjustment is that it is worth to assume the system is undergoing a constant change. The amount of force that is needed to propose changes is proportional to the cost that lack of this change would make.

Being able to change constantly is just required, the feedback loop between the system and the players provides real-life information that often is not in line with the assumptions made during the system startup.

Once it starts, the process of gamification is gaining a lot of dynamics. Here is how you can control it better. These tips come from experience of the last few years of testing different techniques and observing results.

## **Points balance / rebalance**

It is good practice to balance points and potential rewards based on measurable, rather objective parameters. At TDSOFT these parameters were put as columns of an excel sheet with specific weighted formula. This way the number of points was correlated with strategic importance, difficulty or how cool or uncool the task is, or how much courage and getting outside of comfort zone it requires.

H	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB
name	Time Effort (1h)	Discomfort Rate	Preparation Rate (1h)	Value Rate	Rarity		New Points
Run a party game or event	0.5	Medium discomfort	1	0.1	0.25		2530
Help setting up a party room	0.33	No discomfort	0	0	0.25		330
Be a part of a party grocery shopping expedition	0.5	No discomfort	0	0	0.25		500
Do a stand-up comedy or a funny/relaxing presentation on a party	1	Big discomfort	1	0	0.4		1845
Organize an after-work social meeting with 3 or more colleagues	2	Little discomfort	1	0.1	0.5		1910
Organize a tournament/competition for you and your colleagues	2	Medium discomfort	1	0.1	0.3		3360
Take part in an after-work social meeting with 3 or more colleagues	2	Little discomfort	0	0.1	1		580

*Figure 30 Example of points-balancing spreadsheet used at TDSOFT, author: Mikołaj Popieluch*

Having some system for points balancing will provide a framework that allows the system to behave in a fair way. It reduces the chances of system abuse, by exploiting low effort - high value tasks by some players.

## Progress tracking frequency

One of the best methods to stimulate the system use, is to make sure that the progress is measured frequently enough. If players fight for the title of the employee of the month, but there are no points of progress tracking in between, most of the group may get demotivated.

Providing a daily rundown of what happened (through internal chat / email) allows everyone to remember to use the system daily, see who started using it, who made a lot of points, check “where I am today”.

The more frequent the progress tracking is, the better chance that someone who is far from Top players can actually get some additional recognition, by becoming the hero of the day.

Example of daily activity feed shown below:

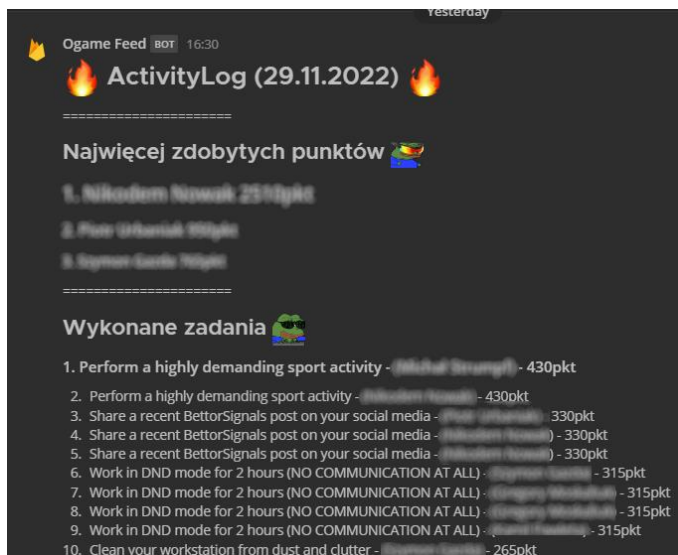


Figure 31 Example of daily gamification feed within a company

## Reward system updates

If system seems to be setup right, but the activity is not there, consider revisiting the reward system. Is there anything worth the chase? Does it feel immediate? If the system does not seem to be working, why not trying to turn it upside-down for some time? There isn't much to lose, but there is a lot to learn.

Reward system is not easy to set up, it requires a lot of creativity, and listening to the actual players, especially in companies with strict budgeting rules. Here is a couple of examples: how about the reward that would let user buy an additional work-from-home day allowance? How about renting some equipment home for some time? (rent the gaming console for 2 weeks?) How about providing access to additional in-person meetings with top-management?

## **Gameplay rebalance / limits**

For the company, the benefit of someone delivering a task is not linear with the number of times it has been done. If someone picks up the trash from the kitchen 3 times a day, then it has much less impact than someone doing this every second day, or on Friday afternoon.

A good and simple tool can help here are limits. Daily, weekly, monthly, personal limits are very easy to calculate, and keep the system in balance.

Additional advantage of limits introduction, is that users who want to fight for more points, needs to look into other challenges/tasks that might have seem less appealing before.

## **Introduce limited offers**

Creating tasks with a specific expiration date is an effective way of giving a project a jumpstart and generating excitement among those involved. This can be especially useful when coupled with rewards that are not easily accessible otherwise. The sense of exclusivity that comes from such limited-time tasks can help motivate people to complete them before the deadline, creating a sense of urgency and helping to ensure that the tasks are completed in a timely fashion. Additionally, it gives people something to look forward to as they strive to meet their goals within the given timeline. By creating tasks with an expiration date, project managers can create incentives for their teams to work together towards success in a timely manner and keep everyone motivated throughout the course of the project.

# **Player personalization, avatars, badges**

The OGAMIFY system seeks to create an environment that encourages players to strive for excellence. By giving players the opportunity to personalize themselves through the use of badges, they have an extra incentive to perform well in order to earn rewards and recognition from their peers. This can also have a positive psychological effect on them as they are subconsciously encouraged by the way they are labeled - titles such as "Office Caretaker" as opposed to "Cleaning Lady" can give players a sense of pride and accomplishment that is not just tied to winning or losing within the game.

Furthermore, specific badges awarded for certain actions can add an extra layer of excitement and thrill for players as they strive for greater success. All in all, personalizing each player's experience with badges will be beneficial for everyone involved in gamification and help foster an engaging environment where everyone is striving for excellence.

## **Bigger reason**

Although it is not something that ought to be used frequently, a higher cause can bring the entire team together. Was there a major event that necessitated a public effort to help? Is there someone in need, and we're raising funds for his medical treatment?

Rewards in gamification don't have to be personal, selfish. They can be altruistic. Sometimes a reward that leads to



truly helping someone in need will be a better motivator for an action than anything else.

Higher cause also touches group effort mechanics, where people start to motivate each other to contribute, to reach the goal as they can't do this alone.

For the business it provides a way to contribute that feels much better than just a "money transfer". Contribution, that brings value and is perceived as a common achievement. Yes, it ends with "money transfer" but everyone has got an opportunity to feel good about it.

# **Chapter 10.**

## **Summary**

This chapter summarizes the core concepts of gamification, for you to quickly access it whenever you would feel in doubt. Technical implementation of gamification elements is rather simple. Worth remembering is that a lot depends on a delicate balance of the system. It is difficult to make it work, and very easy to break it.

The general rule that should be starting point of every discussion of gamification implementation is: observation is the key.

It is almost impossible to define the system that would work in optimal way from the start, but observation, and analysis of feedback will provide immediate suggestions. When in doubt, or when getting mixed signals, just try changing something and see what that was the outcome. Sometimes it is better to make an uninformed decision, rather than to let the system be inefficient, or not attractive enough. The goal is to make gamification work.

# Key elements of gamification system

1. **Points:** A system of points allows users to track their progress and be rewarded for completing activities.
2. **Leaderboards:** Leaderboards are a popular feature of gamified systems, allowing users to compete, measure their own performance against others and strive to get to the top of the leaderboard.
3. **Badges:** Badges provide a visual representation of users' achievements and can be used as a status symbol or bragging rights.
4. **Levels:** Leveling up is an excellent way to reward users for completing activities or reaching specific milestones. Each level should include incentives that encourage users to keep going and strive for higher rewards.
5. **Quests/Missions/Challenges:** The majority of gamified systems include quests, missions, or challenges that incentivize users by giving them a goal to complete in order to earn rewards or progress in the game.

# Key elements of reward system

1. **Measurable Goals:** Players should have clear objectives that are measurable and attainable to feel rewarded for their efforts.
2. **Positive Feedback:** Providing positive feedback helps players feel rewarded for achieving their goals and encourages them to continue playing.
3. **A Variety of Rewards:** Having a variety of rewards available from different levels of achievement allows players to choose the type of reward that best suits them and motivates them to strive for higher goals.
4. **Social Recognition:** Receiving recognition from peers or friends increases the feeling of accomplishment, which can be an additional reward in its own right.
5. **Instant Gratification:** Delivering rewards quickly after achieving a goal helps players feel like their efforts have been recognized and appreciated immediately, increasing their motivation to keep playing the game.

# Key elements of human motivation

1. **Personal Development:** People are driven to constantly improve themselves and to grow, both professionally and personally.
2. **Sense of Purpose:** People want to feel like their work has a purpose and meaning, and that they are making a difference in the world.
3. **Autonomy:** People want to feel empowered in their work and have control over the tasks they do and how they do them.
4. **Recognition:** Being rewarded for success or recognition for hard work can be a strong motivator for people to continue striving for achievements.
5. **Belonging:** Feeling connected with others in the workplace is an important factor in motivation as it fosters collaboration, engagement, and trust between team members.

# Key elements of personal gamification

**1. Easy start** - do not start a day ambitious. Ask for minimal progress first.

**2. Multiple reward factors** - make multiple milestone metrics. They will keep giving wind under your wings during the workday.

**3. Very frequent gratification** - update progress as frequently as possible and see the metrics reach new milestones multiple times a day

**4. Success that seems to be just around the corner** - find the closest milestone that appears satisfactory big and aim for it (this is good for getting the final “push”)

**5. Social validation** - tell others about what you are doing, brag a little, this will trigger pain-avoidance mechanism of making fool out of yourself

**6. Be kind to yourself** - failures are not important, progress so far is. Cherish the progress and the path already taken. Any progress matters.

# **Why it is worth using leaderboards**

Leaderboards are important in gamification systems because they provide an effective way to motivate and engage users.

Leaderboards provide a central point of focus for a user to strive for and can create competition between users which encourages them to work harder and longer.

Leaderboards also provide an easy way for users to track their progress over time, allowing them to set goals and see how far they have progressed towards those goals.

In addition, leaderboards can also be used as rewards for high scores or achievements, providing further motivation for players.



# How can leaders leverage on gamification?

1. **Increase Engagement:** Gamification can help to increase engagement for specific activities. For example, challenges or contests can be used to involve employees in the company's goals and objectives and motivate them to take part in initiatives that benefit the organization as a whole.

2. **Drive Action:** Leaders can use gamification to promote desired behaviors and drive action toward a specific goal. This could include using rewards or badges to incentivize positive behaviors, such as completing tasks on time or meeting certain objectives.

3. **Foster Collaboration:** Gamification helps create an atmosphere of collaboration among team members, allowing them to work together towards a common goal. This could involve setting up leaderboards or competitions where teams earn points for completing tasks together more quickly than others, encouraging teamwork—and healthy competition!

4. **Reward Performance:** Gamification allows leaders to reward outstanding performance with tangible prizes that motivate employees and keep them engaged with their work. This could be anything from gift cards or extra vacation time to special recognition from key figures within the organization or industry at large.

# **Chapter 11.**

## **Tools I personally use for Gamification**

# Whiteboard

What makes writing on a whiteboard so efficient? Putting the current state of the game there provides a few interesting benefits:

1. it creates social pressure, just like a leaderboard
2. it provides transparency in how the rules transform into benefits, wins.
3. It rewards “the eye” immediately, as soon as someone accomplishes something worth writing there, he can do it. Updating the whiteboard with own accomplishment is very satisfying action.

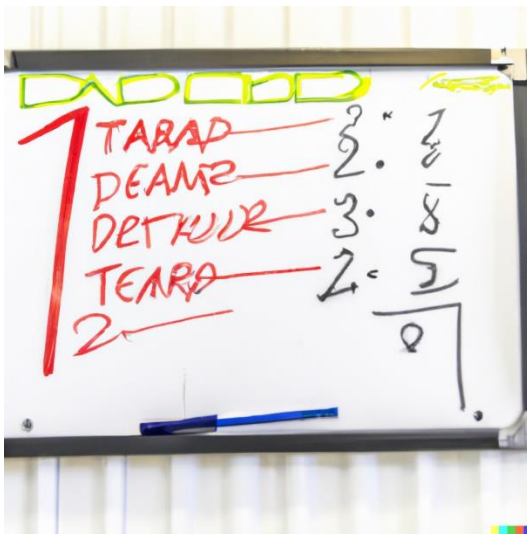


Figure 32 Generated by DALL-E, "draw a whiteboard with a leaderboard written on it, in a car service workshop"

# Spreadsheet

Spreadsheets are extremely versatile and good for gamification. Modern software allows to create spreadsheets and give read-only access to other people in the organization, which makes it very useful in terms of process transparency.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Monthly office challenge!				
2	WHO	WHEN	WHAT	POINTS	
3	Adam	2.03	cleaning coffee machine	180	
4	John	4.03	opening the office	100	
5	Mike	4.03	taking out trash	50	
6	John	5.03	opening the office	100	
7	Adam	6.03	cleaning coffee machine	200	
8	John	8.03	taking out trash	50	
9	Mike	10.03	opening the office	100	
10					
11					
12	MONTHLY RANKING!				
13		WHO	SUM of POINTS		
14	1st	Adam	380		
15	2nd	John	250		
16	3rd	Mike	150		
17		Grand Total	780		

Figure 33 Simple office gamification example

Simple sheet with a pivot table that sums up the points is enough to create a leaderboard - which as we already know is a very powerful motivator in any game.

Here is the link to example spreadsheet used to gamify the experience of writing a book:  
<https://dariusztarczynski.com/excel-templates>

Spreadsheets have to be managed manually, so they won't really work for team sizes bigger than a few people, there might be too much management required. Their use is also

limited to groups of people that know each other - for example, office gamification. It is a good introduction to getting accustomed to simple concepts of applied gamification and it is a *good enough* tool allowing everyone to observe the dynamics of the game.

Spreadsheets are also great for personal gamification - whether it is just general personal growth, or trying to reach a specific goal, like writing a book, or achieving desired weight through fitness and food choices awareness.

## Task managers

Apps that let you manage tasks could be a great tool for gamification too. The simplest requirements would be to allow to assign certain points for certain tasks as in the example below. The “GAME POINTS” custom field was used to attribute points to specific task. In this example Clickup platform has been used (which also has a freeware option) to achieve this.

My story with this tool was writing masters dissertation. I had very little time then, so I had to work efficiently. Normally I would go to office on Saturday and Sunday for a few hours to focus on work (I had 2 small kids at home) and go back home as quickly as possible to help with the kids. Having certain goal of scoring 400 points each session allowed my brain to create strategy that it felt the best, so some sessions I would focus on expanding the bibliography, some sessions I would write lots of “words”, some sessions I would take care of proper referencing of each scientific research and image.

To help myself with the motivation, I also created a custom “Dashboard”, where I would put a few widgets that would show: points gathered today, points gathered in total, points remaining till some “Goal”, approximate points left (just so my brain could rest with thought that it is not that far away from completion), and a few others. As mentioned previously in this book – the more “indicators of success” the better to motivate our brain to keep spending the energy on the tasks.

DONE 7 TASKS		GAME POINTS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	run a sample pytorch script	100
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	start learning pytorch from tutorials	100
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	learn basics of tensorboard	100
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	run a model and inspect it in tensorboard	500
+ New task		1,200
TO DO 4 TASKS		GAME POINTS
<input type="checkbox"/>	learn basics of training model that is based on the numerical / stock market data	200
<input type="checkbox"/>	read article about trading on crypto markets using pytorch	100

*Figure 34 Clickup used as a simple task list gamified by "GAME POINTS" custom field.*

## OGAMIFY

Gamify is a tool created by the team behind TDSOFT company (you can look at it at the <https://ogamify.com> website) as an ultimate office leadership tool.

The best use of Ogamify is for companies who would seek a way to motivate and empower their employees without too much cost of management or additional training. With the ability to create a custom system with tasks, Ogamify allows any company to implement their rules and show their employees what kind of actions are being rewarded.

Ogamify has 5 main sections:

**Leaderboard** - which shows live employee of the month ranking.

**Challenges** - that allow group of people work towards one common target (for example charity transfer).

**Tasks** - that show a list of individual tasks one can participate in.

**Store** - which is how points can be converted into real perks and the latest.

**Value Feed** - where valuable notes shared by members on their path to personal growth can be gathered for others to use.

Ogamify allows the administrator to create any kind of challenge for their employees, actively moderate the submissions and respond to the people's feedback, optimizing the efficiency of the system.



Leaderboard



Challenges



Tasks



Store

*Figure 35 Main menu of OGAMIFY software*

Ogamify is a good starting point for any manager who is interested in real aspects of gamification. Its simple structure and welcoming interface make onboarding team members very easy. Claiming a task takes only a few clicks of a button, same with claiming a reward. Badges, rankings, and challenges allow the manager to spice up the game a bit, while a careful moderation of the store items and tasks helps him to communicate to the team members what is appreciated, and what isn't.

### Task's view:

Each task can have limits, option for write notes, option for setting the submission due date, custom icon and added description.

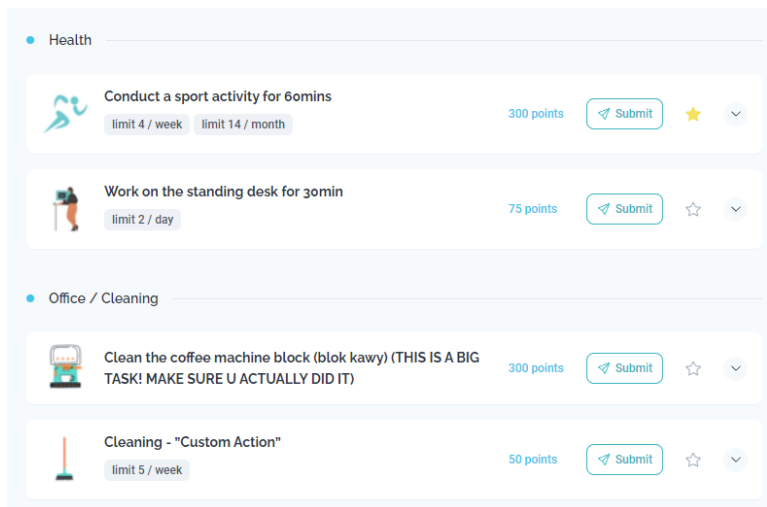


Figure 36 Example tasks from OGAMIFY platform

### Leaderboard view:



Leaderboard is monthly based as a standard, provides a way to quickly notice the current position of each player. Showcasing the player badge, personalizes the experience and tells a little bit more story about each player. Every user can browse previous months to see changing trends of engagement.

Clicking on any player provides details about him, his level, his recent actions, so that users can track and compare each other's strategy towards the win.











Leaderboard		Select Leaderboard: December	
Rank	Name	Featured Badge	Points
	 Jane	 Social Media Supporter III	37645
2	 Wito	 Office Caretaker III	35395
3	 Adam	 Public Speaker I	32570
4	 Gregory	 Deep Worker III	23295
5	 Dariusz	 Study&Coder III	19565

Figure 37 Leaderboard example from OGAMIFY software

## Individual challenges and Group challenges

Challenges allows to pack some actions in a special reward. Group challenges allow multiple people to participate in a special action by submitting their work in specific areas. Challenges differ by number of points needed, tasks that count, and reward size.

Individual challenges are mostly used to gather a special badge and some extra coins for doing activities that company treats as especially important. Individual challenges create an automated system of endorsement that drive additional efforts.

A good way to think about challenges is “booster zones”. Special place, where points matter a bit more, so it is worth checking and adjusting own strategy to maximize the output.

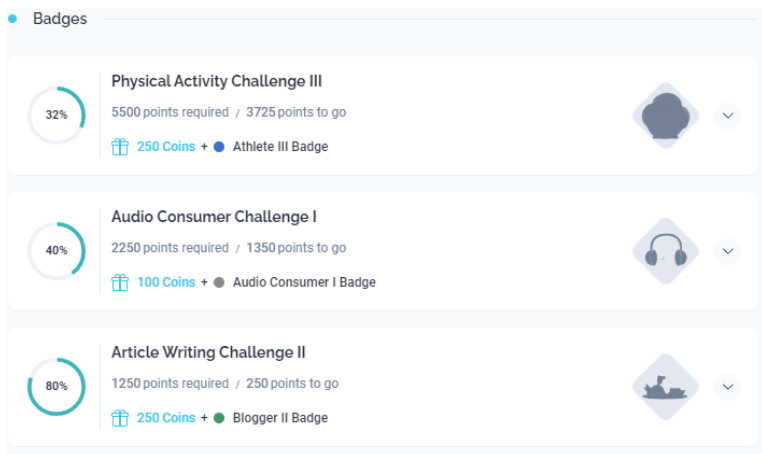


Figure 38 Example of individual challenges implementation

67%

### Deep Working Challenge II

1400 points required / 455 points to go

250 Coins + Deep Worker II Badge

---

Description

Did you try the no-communication option though?

Challenge progressing tasks

**DND 2h**

Work in DND mode for 2 hours (NO COMMUNICATION AT ALL)

315 points

Figure 39 Example of individual challenge layout

## Store view:

The store allows to exchange system coins into rewards. Both virtual and physical. Player spends his coins to buy one-off product or puts his coins into a group purchase hoping other players will commit too.

#### SteelSeries QcK Edge mousepad

Fabric mouse pad for gamers - Stitched edges for added durability - Exclusive QcK microfiber for...

Progress **0/810**

Not enough coins 50

Show details

---

#### SteelSeries QcK Prism Cloth Medium mousepad

The QcK Prism gaming mousepad combines the legendary QcK micro-woven cloth found in the world's...

Progress **500/720**

Not enough coins 50

Show details

---

#### Razer Basilisk V3 mouse

Create, control, and champion your playstyle with the new Razer Basilisk V3—the quintessential...

Progress **0/1670**

Not enough coins 50

Show details

Figure 40 Example of physical rewards

Group rewards (where players collect coins together):

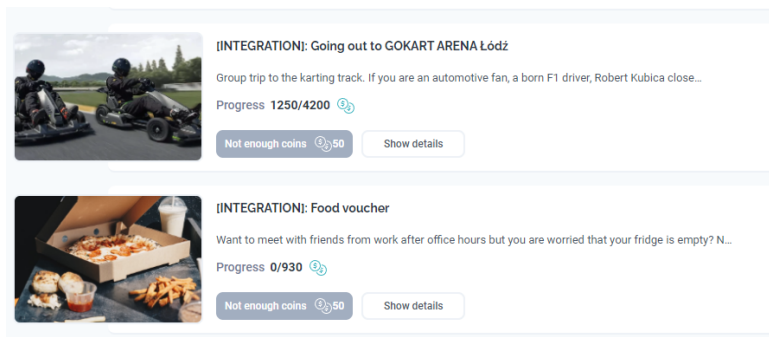


Figure 41 Example of group rewards

Group rewards have an option to see who contributed so far:

#### Contributors

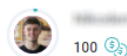
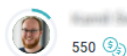
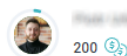
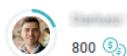


Figure 42 Group reward contribution view, that shows people who already committed

Imagination is the only limitation, here is a few examples of virtual/fun rewards:

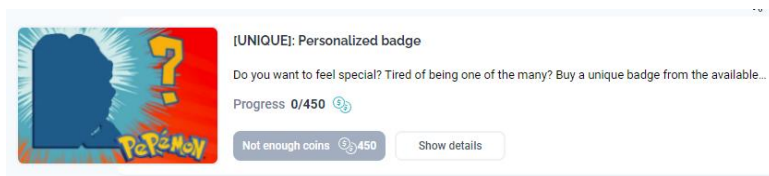
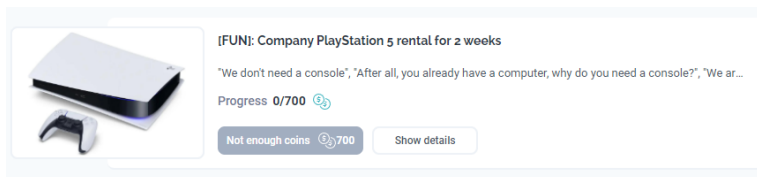


Figure 43 An example of virtual reward





*Figure 44 Example of temporary access to gaming console as a reward*


## Profile view:

Profile view sidebar allows player to change his featured badge, see his recent progress, level, and points required to level up.


It is good to look at it from time to time and see own progress.


Very similar view is accessible to look at other players too, track their recent actions and achievements.



**Dariusz Tarczyński** 


Book Reader III




**94675** pts. earned  
**1075** pts. to the next level  
**65**  to earn

**41**  
Level

**13**  
Owned badges

 **Featured badge**



**Book Reader III**  
3rd level badge for reading books


 **Change featured badge**

Figure 45 Example of player profile view in OGAMIFY

# Counter apps

Apps that help you count things have 2 important valuable benefits:

1. They make action very easy and satisfying – you see a growing number each time you “tap”
2. They are not oppressive in any way, they don’t show failure (missed deadlines, missed streaks, customers who abandoned the chat). Only growth and action counts.



*Figure 46 Example of a counter app: "Tally: Counter & Habit Tracker" by Volodymyr Yahenskyi*

Counter apps are great for small things you want to just keep doing, where quantity matters. Could be very efficient with sales, where boring reporting could be replaced with satisfying number update.

# GamiEngine & GamiStream

**GamiEngine** is an internal tool created by TDSOFT company as the simplest possible tool to create your own gamification system.

GameEngine comes into play when you really want to test things by yourself, without spending too much time on integration, onboarding or 'filling up' the system. GamiEngine can be started by a press of a button, and the test campaign can reach its audience in a matter of minutes! It is also an open-source project, so it can be a good base for creating something custom if you have special needs.

GamiEngine has all the minimal features that a gamification system needs:

1. Users (game master role is provided by administrator account)
2. Tasks
3. Rewards
4. Simplistic leaderboard frontend
5. Simplistic task resolution route

The system is meant to be used by developers and allow them to provide new gamification mechanisms, new concepts, without figuring out the basic stack and database model all over again with each project.

**Gamistream** is an internal tool created by TDSOFT company as a simplest possible way to inject gamification into your current system, application or website. Great for



the B2C market where you already have customers using your product.

Gamistream provides an API that lets you count the game for basically anyone, at any time, and immediately see results of it through a cloud-based dashboard. It can scale to any traffic and will work 24/7, while you will gather data about your customers and test different scenarios of how to engage them more. Typical implementation of Gamistream could be a B2C business model that wants to create a special motivational program for its customers for doing certain actions - submitting a review, buying additional services or literally anything. It operates on both server-side and client-side and its end-user usage comes down to sending one http request with user action data.

Gamistream can work cross-domain, which means that companies can leverage user interaction across the range of their products and improve customer loyalty.

The key points of GamiStream are:

1. CMS that allows you to create and manage gamification events
2. API that allows you to trigger gamification events
3. Server-to-server hook to provide output events back to system
4. Data presentation, export so you can draw results quickly

**Chapter 12.**  
**Sources of inspiration.**  
**Apps that gamify.**

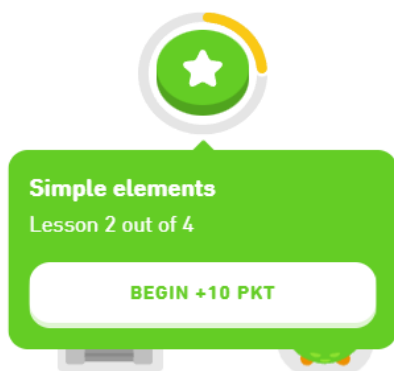
# Duolingo

Duolingo is a web and mobile app that lets you learn 30+ languages online using bite-sized lessons based on science. Once a small startup, now business worth over \$6 billion dollars.

Duolingo is famous for his gamification approach towards the learning. First five minutes with the app present the user with a number of accomplishment and a very attainable daily goal that is just within the reach to catch. Users end the first exercise by already getting 15/20 points of the daily goal.



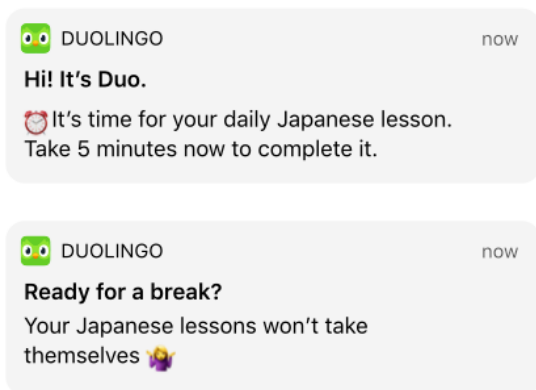
*Figure 47 Big green button "start" is very tempting to press. Source: <https://duolingo.com/learn>*



*Figure 48 Pressing the button, immediately rewards the user. Source: <https://duolingo.com/learn>*

Duolingo also by default count streaks, to ensure users would make learning habitual as soon as possible.

Notification systems ensure the effort of starting the app to continue learning is decreased to press of a thumb.



*Figure 49 Duolingo is famous from its very interesting notification system. Source: <https://blog.duolingo.com/hi-its-duo-the-ai-behind-the-meme/>*

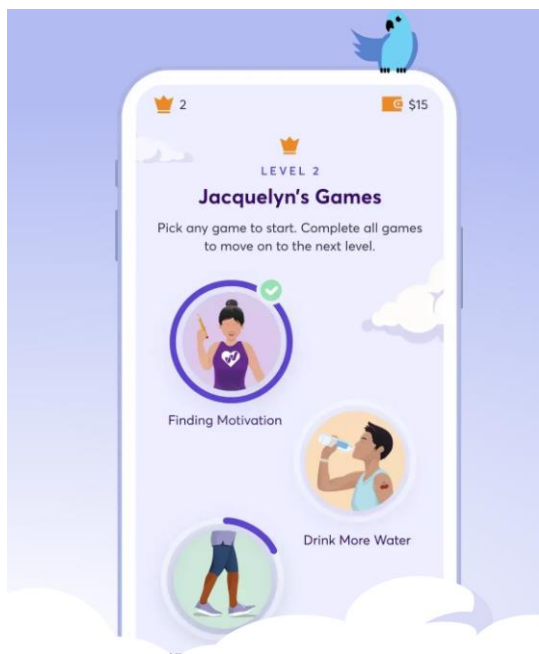
Gamification often resides in area of uncertainty, therefore observation and testing are very important. Duolingo introduced the operating principle “Test everything” and is always running experiments on a small number of learners to look for higher efficiency.

Once user is learning, he experiences multiple score-based gamification tricks: he is rewarded multiple times, he fulfills challenges and booster quests, he participates in leaderboard, where it seems that he is quite close to winning. On top of that Duolingo adds time-based rewards to connect on pain avoidance mechanisms.

All in all, Duolingo is one of the greatest examples of practical implementation of gamification in real world apps.

# WayBetter.com

“Reach your healthy lifestyle goals the fun way. Play social games for success that sticks.”



*Figure 50 source: [waybetter.com](https://waybetter.com)*

Way better is an app that gamifies healthy lifestyle activities: fitness, dietary, wellbeing.

The 3 main elements of play there come from:

1. Gamified Microgoals – WayBetter ensures that the goals are small enough to build a momentum through a streak of wins. It also makes it very easy to start, when player knows, the reward is very close.

2. Motivation Boosters – WayBetter also uses multiple visual techniques to show the growth and progress of the player in numerous ways and keep him entertained.

3. Social Support – Goals are oriented around groups of people. The social pressure adds another point to motivation of the player.

As of time of writing of this book, WayBetter has over 1.3 millions of players and keeps growing

## **Financial apps**

Modern financial apps are very often shaped in a way that gamifies the investment experience to the user. Financial apps want users to make multiple decisions, as typically they make money on the % of each transaction. More transactions = more profit. Their app are very appealing into making decision, by creating a sense of “fear of missing out”. The chart is always updated and the very big buttons “BUY” and “SELL” are always apparent, waiting for the investor to make a decision now.

Placing a bet (well in theory investment), also often comes with a satisfying sound, and provides thrill seen only in Casinos. No wonder why many people accuse modern financial apps of abusing the psychology and tricking players into gamble.



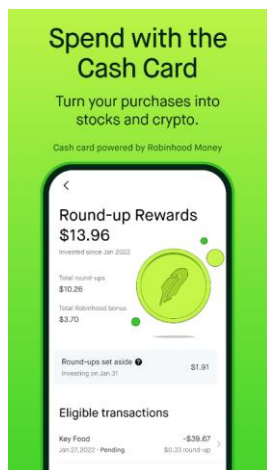
Figure 51 Losing all life savings within hours is easier than ever before.  
Source: reddit.com/r/wallstreetbets

There are also other lighter ways that financial apps use to attract the players. For example, XTB trading platform advertises a special “gift” that will become available to newly registered users.



Figure 52 Source: xtb.com

Another typical value driver for financial apps are cards and card payments. The more user pays with their card, the more cashback he would receive.



*Figure 53 Robinhood app advertises financial rewards program for spending money with their Cash Card*



# **Chapter 13.**

## **OGAMIFY Practical tips**

Special thanks to Piotr Urbaniak, for coming up  
with the idea for this chapter.

# Introduction

This chapter is geared primarily towards OGAMIFY platform users, but even if you're unfamiliar with it, you can still find useful information on the mechanics of the system. That said, I encourage you to use OGAMIFY's free trial in order to test out and gain some first-hand knowledge about its functions. On the other hand, if you don't plan on using a platform like OGAMIFY and instead intend to create your own project from scratch, then I hope that this chapter can still provide some helpful insights into structuring your project.






If you're considering OGAMIFY for your gamification project, then this chapter is must-read.



# 1. Start with basic tasks

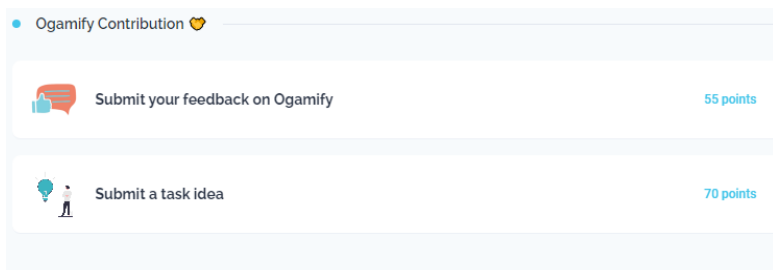
Starting small is the key to successfully introducing business gamification into the workplace. The starting point should be a minimal list of tasks that are achievable and don't take too much effort to complete.

These tasks can be ones that people already do, but don't always get public recognition for, such as washing dishes, sorting cutlery and emptying the dishwasher. These will give employees a smooth start to their gamification experience and will encourage reciprocity, encouraging employees to notice everyone's efforts towards common good.

Office 		
	Throw out a large bag of garbage from the kitchen limit 4 / week	295 points
	Sort the cutlery (knives, forks, spoons) into the right containers. limit 5 / week	55 points
	Store the vessels and containers on the dryer and countertop to cupboards and boxes. limit 5 / week	35 points
	Wash the left-over dishes limit 5 / week	40 points

*Figure 54 Example of basic tasks worth starting with*

It is also very important to provide a way to feedback and read peoples suggestions. Setting up these tasks will also help you reduce communication noise in other internal company channels with people discussing and exchanging ideas (there is nothing wrong with it, just not necessarily productive).



*Figure 55 Example of basic feedback tasks*

At TDSOFT, it is recognized that when the amount of feedback becomes overwhelming, it is beneficial to start engaging in regular conversations. To that end, a Wednesday morning optional meeting has been established wherein employees can discuss details regarding their gamification experience and share insightful feedback with one another.

This optional meeting allows everyone at the company to have an open dialogue about the various aspects of their experience and provide perspectives from multiple points of view. Additionally, sharing constructive criticism in-person provides an opportunity for team members to work collaboratively to identify issues that could be improved upon for maximized efficiency.


Furthermore, taking the time to meet on a weekly basis ensures that any potential issues can be addressed quickly, preventing further disruption or miscommunication in the long run. All in all, having regularly scheduled conversations enables TDSOFT personnel to stay on top of both current challenges and future opportunities.

## **2. Setup the store**

If your company does not have any extra funds to give out to employees, you may choose to ignore this chapter. However, if there is room in the budget, this chapter provides an interesting approach that could benefit the business.


When an employee requests an extra piece of equipment for their desk, such as a more ergonomic chair, mouse, or keyboard, or better headset, it often triggers a long and costly internal process to approve or deny the purchase. Even if the item is approved and the employee is given what they requested, the internal cost associated with this process can be very high. On the flip side of that, if the item is not approved then the company will still have incurred this cost but without yielding any positive results. It seems that there is no real 'win-win' scenario in this situation.


To reduce these internal costs and provide satisfaction to employees who are in need of certain pieces of equipment, companies should consider implementing a system where 'internal coins' can be used to justify additional office purchases. This would help streamline both processes by reducing the number of steps involved and providing employees with what they need without incurring too much cost for either party.




**[GEAR]: Keyboard up to 250 PLN**

Chose computer keyboard best suited for your needs up to 250 PLN


Progress 0/1150 


Not enough coins  1150 [Show details](#)




**[GEAR]: Keyboard up to 500 PLN**

Chose computer keyboard best suited for your needs up to 500 PLN


Progress 0/2325 

Not enough coins  2325 [Show details](#)



**[GEAR]: Mouse up to 150 PLN**

Chose computer mouse best suited for your needs up to 150 PLN

Progress 0/700 



Not enough coins  700 [Show details](#)

Figure 56 Example of basic store items, individual rewards


Setting up store items with an extra gear budget will allow employees to decide for themselves, removing a rather chunky decision process from the organization. It could be a very good starting point for the store.

Another great item to have might be group collections, for example for a night out:



**[INTEGRATION]: BOWLING NIGHT**

Once again we would like to invite every contributor to Gra

Progress 200/2600 


Donate  50 [Show details](#)

Figure 57 Example of basic store items, group reward

The company would have to find the budget anyway, but instead of top-down process, people can vote with their own coins.

### **3. Monthly celebration**

Ogamify playthrough is an experience that takes place on a month-by-month basis. This approach offers a range of benefits for companies, such as being able to recognize and reward the top three employees each month. Additionally, it allows for in-office celebrations that help to promote a positive work atmosphere. Furthermore, companies can change the rules and points without facing too much resistance from those who have invested in their own winning strategies.

Communication of this gameplay can be effectively done through company newsletters, chat groups, and monthly gatherings. Through these channels, companies can keep employees informed about the progress of the game, their individual performance, and potential rewards for success. This encourages employees to stay engaged with the game, which helps build morale and team spirit within the workplace.

### **4. Find a gamemaster**

Just like in D&D game, we need a game master. Someone who will make the final decisions, regulate the system, react to abuse.

Here are typical action points for gamemaster:

- Adjust points balance
- Add/remove tasks from the system



- Add/remove store items
- Make sure people's feedback is handled
- Make sure bought items are delivered to people
- Handle abuse

This role takes a few hours a week and can be outsourced.

OGAMIFY provides a platform for users to create their own gaming worlds, but without an effective game master in place it can fail. A good game master will help the system become more successful by increasing user engagement, reducing negative events and ultimately creating an enjoyable environment for all participants.

## 5. Handle system abuse

Abuse will happen for sure. Some people may become so focused on achieving success that they will claim points for activities that were not actually completed or with excessive frequency. This can result in an unfair advantage and ultimately, abuse of the system.

Our observation so far is that in every group there will be someone with this tendency. If abuse is mishandled, it may lead people to dropping off from the competition.

Abuse destroys the fun for everyone, so we need to handle it.

Here are a few tips from our experience on how to handle this:

1. **React quickly** - discuss situation, remove points from the task that
2. **Clarify task descriptions** - the majority of abuse happens when someone pretends he thought that

this task can be done in a certain “convenient” way, for example, that “taking out trash” counts for each bag separately and he took 4 bags, so 4x the points.

3. **Handle personally** - we asked one user to not use the platform once, it worked, nothing else did.
4. **Allow reporting** - You can create a task for spotting and reporting system abuse so people who like to watch others can get points for being a snitch.
5. **Add limits to tasks**. Adding monthly, daily, and weekly limits ensured that we are not getting flooded with meaningless points.
6. **Rebalance points** monthly to reduce incentive in tasks that are “too easy for points”

All in all, it is about balance, properly balanced system will not encourage any abuse, while one that is not well thought will cause a lot of grief for everyone.

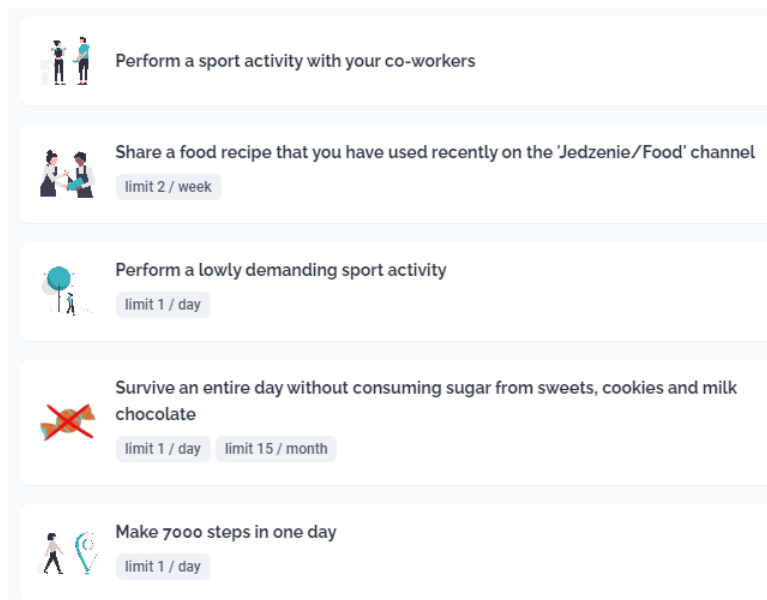
## 6. Promote healthy habits

Healthy team is well performing team. Almost every company now provide some level of sport incentive/benefit card that allows employees to participate in sport activities paid by the company.

Our experience is that these benefits, are used but in a limited form, some people do not have the meanings or life situation to frequently visit gym, and those people are pulled out of the system, condemned to stay as they are.

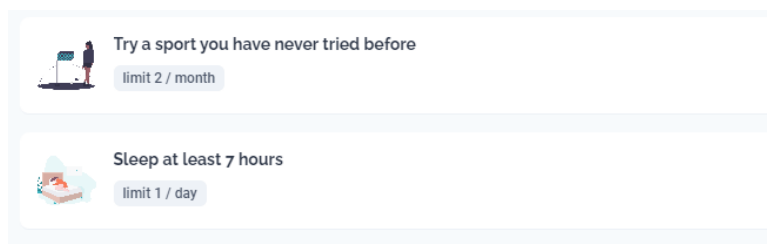
OGAMIFY health tasks, because of their elasticity can handle broader group of users and truly engage even those who are not visiting gym regularly.

The system that worked for TDSOFT was classification of sport initiatives based on the level of difficulty of a task. So players can get points for just having a 1h walk, or by not eating any sweets for a day.



*Figure 58 Example of tasks promoting healthy habits*

Ogamify also gives room for experimenting with new tasks that may help someone who is just starting and trying to build good habits.



*Figure 59 Non-typical examples of health promoting tasks*

So, to sum up, it is not only about sport. It is also about resting well, being conscious about own diet, or counting even minimal activity.

## 7. Promote focus

What is a killer of every productive day? Having the day filled shattered with random meetings and chats. Companies fight it in various ways, some even treat reducing the time of meeting as a KPI that they measure.

OGAMIFY can allow to change the culture, by promoting prolonged “Do Not Disturb” timeframes for highly focused work.

The screenshot displays the 'Work management' section of the OGAMIFY app. It features a list of tasks designed to promote focused work through Do Not Disturb (DND) modes and standing desk usage. Each task includes an icon, a description, and associated limits.

- Work management** (Briefcase icon)
- Share results of your work in the DND mode** (Lightbulb icon)
  - limit 1 / day
  - limit 10 / month
- DND 1h** (DND 1h icon)
  - Work in the DND mode for 1 hour (NO COMMUNICATION AT ALL)
  - limit 1 / day
- DND 3h** (DND 3h icon)
  - Work in DND Light for 3 hours (occasional communication permitted)
  - limit 1 / day
  - limit 3 / week
  - limit 8 / month
- Work on the standing desk for 30min** (Person at desk icon)
  - limit 3 / day
- DND 2h** (DND 2h icon)
  - Work in DND mode for 2 hours (NO COMMUNICATION AT ALL)
  - limit 3 / week
  - limit 10 / month

Figure 60 Example tasks promoting prolonged focused work

Organizations that adopt a Do Not Disturb (DND) policy are seeing numerous benefits for their employees. DND policies

help to create an environment where people know not to expect immediate responses from those they're trying to reach. This decreases the sense of urgency and requirement for an immediate response, helping to reduce stress levels in the workplace. Additionally, this encourages individuals to take their time in getting back to people, resulting in better thought-out responses that are more likely to lead to better outcomes.

With the ability to work without constantly worrying about being disturbed or needing an immediate response, employees are also feeling more accomplished at the end of the day with a greater sense of "getting something done". This increased productivity helps boost morale and can have a positive effect on team performance as well.

Overall, DND-enabled organizations are creating a calmer atmosphere with less pressure on employees and allowing them to take their time when responding to others. This leads to better communication between colleagues, improved productivity, and a greater sense of accomplishment at the end of each day.

## **8. Leverage badges**

Have you ever thought why fashion industry is so huge? Why do we feel the need to dress up as we desire, and stand out? Why can't we have all the same clothes?

The need to express ourselves externally through our actions, gestures, how we speak and how we present ourselves is imprinted into the core of feeling of being "myself".

Badges help people to feel like they are presenting themselves.

# Leaderboard












Rank	Name	Featured Badge
	 Jane 26	 Social Media Supporter III
2	 Wito 44	 Office Caretaker III
3	 Adam 7	 Ogamify Early Adopter
4	 Gregory 40	 Deep Worker III


Figure 61 Example of leaderboard view with badges displayed

People who have collected more than one badge, can make a conscious choice of “why they want to appear as”.



**Wito**

Office Caretaker III




**102765** pts. earned  
**3485** pts. to the next level

**44**  
Level

**11**  
Owned badges


★ Featured badge




**Office Caretaker III**

3rd level badge for taking care of our office


🏆 Owned badges




**Office Caretaker III**




**Athlete II**




**Deep Worker II**



**Office Caretaker II**



**Athlete I**



**Audio Consumer I**

Figure 62 Example of profile view with list of badges accumulated so far

Leveraging badges, you bring additional dimension to the play, by helping the team to express how they feel about themselves.

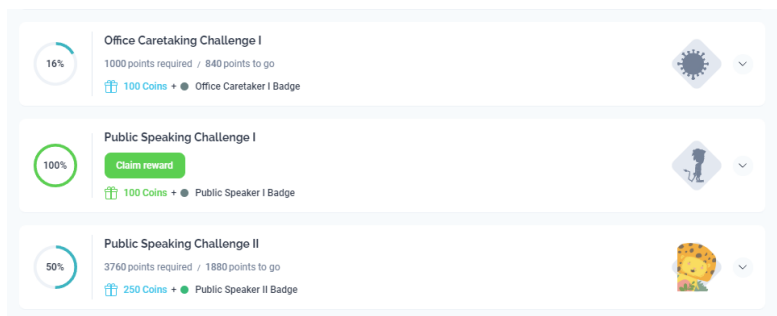
Those who want to attain a specific badge will be really motivated to complete tasks attached to it, to get it.

## 9. Introduce challenges

Personal and group challenges are the “booster rewards”. They help users to run through that finish line without stopping.

The typical user who would want to gather more points, would use the challenges to find most convenient way for himself to commit into the play, while getting something extra.

Challenges come with badges, making them feel as “earned” through special effort.



*Figure 63 Example of challenges and the important "CLAIM" button that brings the immediate reward*

Claiming the reward is a very satisfying experience that addicts, but in a positive way, helping this person to reach new highs through good habits.



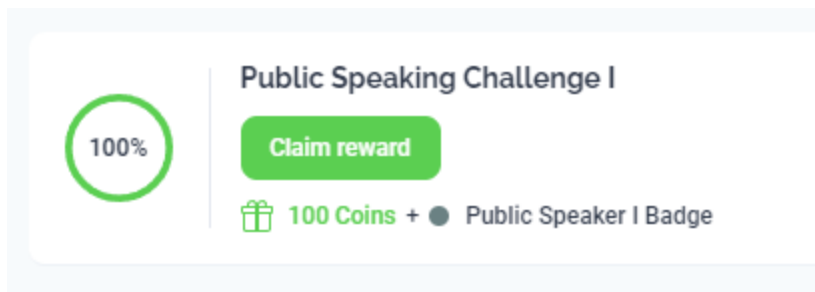


Figure 64 Example of "Claim reward" button

## 10. Empower self-reflection

A healthy society needs to consist of healthy individuals. Not only in physical matter, but also mental one too. The topic of mental health is getting more and more attention as people visible struggle to cope with what they can see around them. Abundance of negative news in mass media, crisis, shortages, sense detachment from peers.

Ogamify can help support initiatives that are aiming towards increased level of consciousness, self-reflection, meditation. At no cost, employees may become motivated to try out a short exercise to silence their mind for a few minutes and experience the calmness in the never stopping world around them.

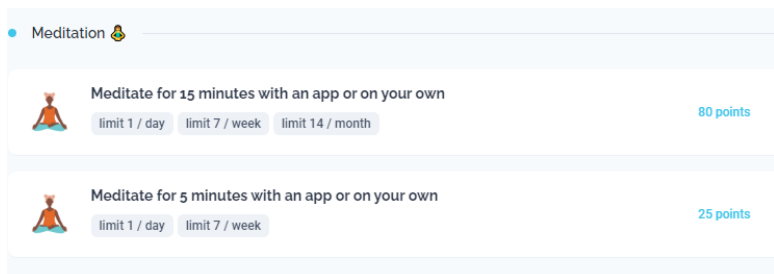






Figure 65 Example of tasks introducing meditation into the office game space

That kind of tasks don't need to have many points attached to them. People seem to want to do it anyway, so placing such items in the store just works as a regular reminder, that it is good to take a 5-minute break and meditate.

Another insight, that comes from our experience is that it is generally good to support personal growth through regular consumption of any kind of "self-development" material.

Typical split is between reading books, listening of audio books or watching videos.

	Bring a self-development or work-related book to the office library	530 points
	limit 2 / month	
	Listen to 30 minutes of self-development or work-related material	195 points
	limit 4 / day    limit 15 / month	
	Watch 30 minutes of self-development or work-related video materials	220 points
	limit 4 / day    limit 15 / month	
	Read a self-development or work-related book for 30 minutes	220 points
	limit 3 / day    limit 15 / month	

*Figure 66 Example of tasks focusing on consumption of self-help media*

Users share the title of material they consumed in notes, so anyone can see it and spark a conversation / ask for recommendations.

## 11. Boost social media

Tiny actions can make a lot of difference when combined with sheer amount of people who chip in. Ogamify can become a great tool, that motivates people to engage into social media activity of the company, therefore spreading the important messages.

Such actions can increase the speed of brand growth, reduce costs of recruitment, and even impact the ability to bring in new customers.






	Leave a comment at a TDSOFT post on Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn limit 1 / week	150 points
	Invite people to like our profile on your social media with your own post / stories limit 2 / month	440 points
	Like a recent post on our social media (Instagram, Facebook, or LinkedIn) limit 3 / day	10 points
	Share a TDSOFT post on Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn limit 8 / month	145 points
	Help with the creation of a social media post	305 points

Figure 67 Example of tasks boosting company ability to leverage its social media

## 12. Inject strategic goals






Each company is working on the process of maximizing the impact of broadcasted strategic goals. Project Management frameworks are helping to deliver just that.

Ogamify can help your company take the shortcut and support any top-initiative, any strategic goal, with chunks of work that help deliver them.

The way of putting strategic goals into Ogamify can be different depending on type of company, its profile, the general outcome needed, so it has to be tailored separately for each company.

A good process to have is to establish some way of communication between the Game Master role and the top management team, so that they can understand that Ogamify can realistically enable them to support implementing their goals immediately.

Some companies are based on highly skilled workforce and want to support personal development of each member. A typical task set for such purpose may look like this:

	Study & Create with an online course and/or documentation for 30mins, and write what you were practicing	250 points
	limit 4 / day    limit 20 / month	
	Publish your personal project on Behance/GitHub (or similar)	1015 points
	limit 1 / month	
	Perform a 30 minutes long pair-programming/pair-designing session outside working hours	330 points
	limit 2 / week	
	Share on the "Useful Stuff" channel what inspired you lately and how you used it in a project	45 points
	limit 1 / day	
	Spend 20 minutes exploring Behance/GitHub (or similar)	55 points
	limit 3 / day	

*Figure 68 Example of tasks supporting strategic company goals and needs*

Another example of Ogamify is to support one-off actions, combined with some broader company-wide initiatives. The example below shows a suggest tasks lineup for “R&D Product Idea” contest.

● R&D Product Idea Contest 💡



(1) Submit an R&D idea for our new company product

limit 2 / month

2000 points



(4) Create a presentation and present your idea on the 'R&D contest final event'

2500 points



(2) Talk through your idea at the Innovation Meeting

limit 1 / month

2500 points



(3) Create a Product Canvas for your product idea

limit 2 / month

2000 points

*Figure 69 Example of one-off category for specific initiative*

# **Final words**

This guide has provided an overview of how to introduce gamification mechanics into a business setting. It explored various techniques such as points, rewards, leaderboards, and challenges that can be used to engage employees and create a more enjoyable work environment. Additionally, other activities such as creating an avatar or offering “achievement badges” were examined as potential gamification methods. The guide also discussed the importance of establishing clear goals and taking time to evaluate the results of any gaming initiatives before making any adjustments. Ultimately, by understanding the fundamentals of gamification and investing in its implementation, businesses can use game-like elements to increase employee motivation and improve overall performance. Once you will start implementing the above-mentioned techniques in your everyday life and into your company, you will be able to notice by yourself what works and what doesn't and react accordingly.

I am conducting research that focuses on the effects of gamification and its implementation across various social groups. Gamification is the use of game elements in non-game contexts, such as education, health, and business, to motivate and engage users. Through this research, I am looking to explore whether gamification has positive or negative impacts on different social groups. I hope to gain insight into how gamification affects motivation, engagement, and interest in different contexts. I am seeking any case studies or stories related to gamification and its implementation across social groups. If you have any information that could be helpful for this research project, please share it with me. Any data from previous research studies or your own experiences as it relates to this topic would be greatly appreciated. I do also welcome any



suggestions for further areas of exploration as part of our research project.

Any time, please feel free to contact me at:  
[dariusz.tarczynski@gmail.com](mailto:dariusz.tarczynski@gmail.com) with any questions,  
requests, or feedback you may have. Or just to chat about  
gamification.

See you soon!

Dariusz

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