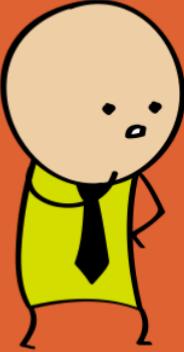


Game On!

USING GAMES TO
EXECUTE IDEAS &
ACCELERATE
INNOVATION >>>



Dr Jason Fox

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Game On!

Using games to execute ideas & accelerate innovation >>

Dr Jason Fox
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The Game Has Changed (yet again)



If you're in business, you've probably heard consultants use the old "the game has changed" line a few times before. It's usually the prelude to a sales pitch that will take a big problem you know you have and turn it on its head with statements like, "You used to think X was your biggest problem, but now the game has changed, and Y is here!"... Then follows some convincing rationale, succeeded by a few generally relatable case studies citing flawed statistics, and the whole thing is finished by a resounding call to action (i.e., buying their stuff). Sometimes they'll even play some classic psychological manoeuvre, adding in a sense of urgency, scarcity and some ego-appeal, leaving you convinced that your purchase decision was the best investment you've ever made.

You know *that* game, right?

Ha. The funny thing is, the game *has* changed. And it will continue to change. In fact, you could say the one thing that never changes is that the games we play keep on changing. They've been changing since humans started walking and perhaps even before that. Adaptation is still the key survival mechanism in this world. But in business we need to take that a step further.

It's not okay to simply adapt to the changes in the market, new consumer demands, or emergent threats to your commercial objectives. You need to be a clever and savvy player. This game requires out-thinking and possibly altogether ignoring your competitors whilst stepping outside the proverbial box to do things better.



But alas! Simply coming up with better ideas won't help, because even the best, most cleverest ideas are useless if we can't make innovation happen.

Innovation can only ever occur when great ideas are executed.*

* It's easy to get uncomfortable using the word "execute" – I mean, why would we want to kill our best ideas? What we mean here is the process of killing the abstract idea by making it real – turning it into actions and results, rather than simply having it remain a jolly good notion.

A Gameful Approach TO IDEAS



This book will introduce you to a gameful approach to making ideas happen.

Right now, there's a bit too much of the classic "just do it" approach in the whole project execution space. This militant old-school strategy works fine for well-defined projects that employ straightforward methods of achieving clear outcomes. But the path to innovation rarely follows a straight line.

So instead, you are going to learn about a gameful approach to making ideas happen. You will get insight into the same thinking that goes behind the designed experience of all good games and will learn how to apply it to your ideas and projects.

Before we get carried away, we're going to have to iron out some of the misconceptions we all have about innovation and ideas. And while we're at it, we'll navigate through some of the resistances you might have about games, too (games can't be serious, right?). We're then going to plunge into a practical philosophy around work and play; unpack The Gameful Action Model, which will help you avoid a backwards approach to innovation; and will give you clarity on how game context can influence and shape the evolution and progression of your ideas.

Then, it'll all be wrapped up with some sort of resounding call to action. Good? Righto, let's go!

the System RESISTS

We want you to innovate-
but don't you dare innovate!



Executing new ideas is never easy. Everyone loves innovation. Until it affects them. Then things get awkward, feathers get ruffled and brilliant ideas get eaten away by games that support egos and the status quo.

You know the games I'm talking about. The games where there never is enough time or resources to make new ideas happen. The games where your best ideas are torn apart in "yeah, but" meetings. The games where you actually make a great start on ideas, yet you can never see them through to completion. Those games.

Imagine you're an organisation, a system to yourself. You have established, tried, and tested ways of doing things. You are efficient. Then along comes a new idea, plucked from the aether. And, like a rock thrown into a pond, it causes disruptions in the established patterns of your life. No one knows exactly what's going on or how they will be affected. People begin to fear change. How will it affect their position and workload? How much will things cost? What will this change mean for them? And besides, you don't even know if this idea will work yet. In fact, you've wasted enough time already. Back to work now, everyone! You're efficient.

The natural state of any system is to maintain equilibrium. New ideas challenge this equilibrium, so the system will naturally work to resist them. To make new ideas happen, we need to rework the systems that resist them. Or, in other words, we need to change the games we play.



Epiphanies are the result of hard work. Waiting will never give rise to a big idea – but we sure like to think it will! We love the romantic notion of the epiphany, the “ah-ha!” moments that are oft popularised as the prelude to massive innovation. We love to think that there is A Big Idea waiting to be discovered. If we could only find The Next Big Thing before everyone else.

But The Next Big Thing will overtake you while you’re waiting. And there’s no One Big Idea that’s going to come a-knocking if you wait long enough.

Epiphanies and “eureka” moments only happen because someone had already invested good time on the problem. When we look at some of the best examples of innovation in the world, all we see is the finished product, not the complex thought-work, the frustrations and failures that went into it. We don’t see the blood, sweat, and tears. The ideas strike us as beautiful and simple and we think, “I could have come up with that,” instead of asking “Could I have *made* that?” There is no shortage of good ideas (or, more correctly, the potential to generate good ideas). But when we have these ideas, there are plenty of things that get in the way to making them happen.



Coming up with new ideas seems to be quite the achievement. Leaving a conference with a heap of new ideas, we often feel like we've done so much work. It's when we get back to the office that we realise... We'll need to put in a lot of man-hours to get anywhere at all. And oftentimes, there's no guarantee that the brilliant new idea will yield any results. It rather takes away the shiny veneer, doesn't it? What this means is that we need to view ideas with an additional lens – the effort lens. If every idea is work in disguise, this means that every idea will require a portion of our limited resources, time and/or money, not to mention the intangible resources, such as the patience and trust of those around us. When we start viewing ideas through this lens, we become selective. We start to deliberately shape, prune, combine and refine our ideas, so that whatever we work on will yield the highest return on effort.

A mate of mine is an expert in helping people achieve financial independence, get rich slowly style. One of the best lessons I learnt from him is to assess how many units of "life energy" are required to make any purchase. Life energy is essentially the hours of time and effort you'd need to invest, directly and indirectly, in the work required to make the money to cover the cost of the purchase. Suddenly that new shirt you're thinking of getting will equate to four hours of work. Makes you think.

And it's similar for how we invest our time, money and effort into our ideas. We need to get a sense of what the real implementation might be, so that we can craft the best approach that won't see us burn out along the way.



INSPIRATION IS GREAT!

then it expires

You can't rely upon inspiration alone to see you through the execution of your most important projects.

One of the classic main power-ups in the timeless Super Mario games is the invincibility star – you don't always know when you're going to get it, but gosh do you know it when you have it! It will have you flashing all sorts of colours while you smash through challenges, obstacles and opponents. The invincibility star is a real game changer. But this power-up only lasts for a very short time. After that, you're back to normal and the challenges and obstacles along your path become very real again.

Inspiration works much like the invincibility power-up. You don't know when you're going to get inspired and when you are, you can obtain a massive return on the effort expended towards achieving your goals. But when the inspiration wears off – and it will – you'll want to have established the structure (the game, if you will) that can ensure progress.

Inspiration is great, until it expires. But in the meantime, you can craft and play games that put inspiration to work, unlocking awesome progress. Progress, after all, is the ultimate motivator.

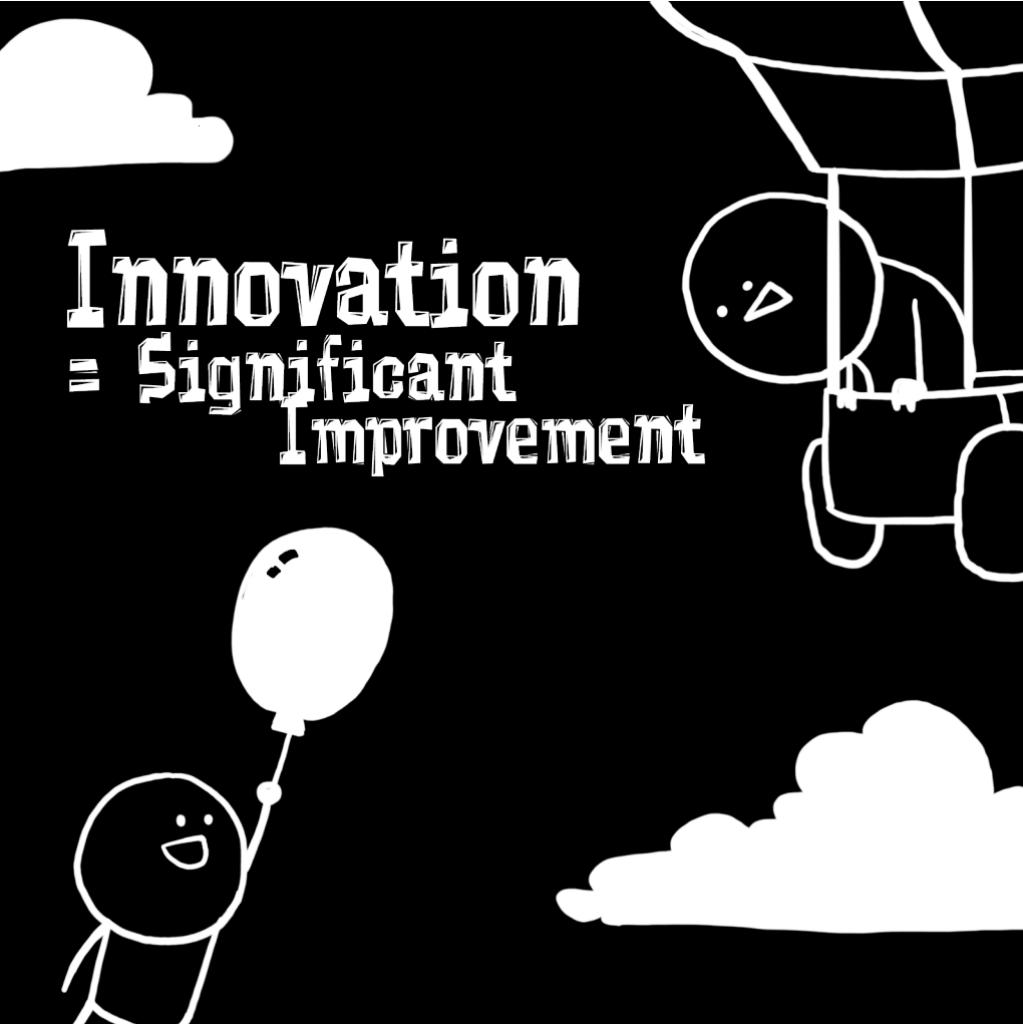


The trouble with big ideas is that they are just so big. We tend to put off big projects because, well, they're big and involve big decisions. Not to mention there are always small tasks aplenty; small tasks that can be dealt with quickly and ticked off our to-do list for a sense of achievement. We convince ourselves that we'll get to the big stuff later, when we have time for it.

But that time never arrives. There's always urgent emails to answer and business-critical whatnots to get onto. Your big ideas will remain just that - ideas - until you can progress them into something real.

Video games can be very good at breaking down an epic journey into a series of quests, each with their own milestones to achieve. Once you've identified the work required to make your ideas happen, you can sequence it into stages. Break down these stages even further, into a series of action steps to check off each day; doesn't the behemoth of an idea look more manageable this way?

Innovation = Significant Improvement



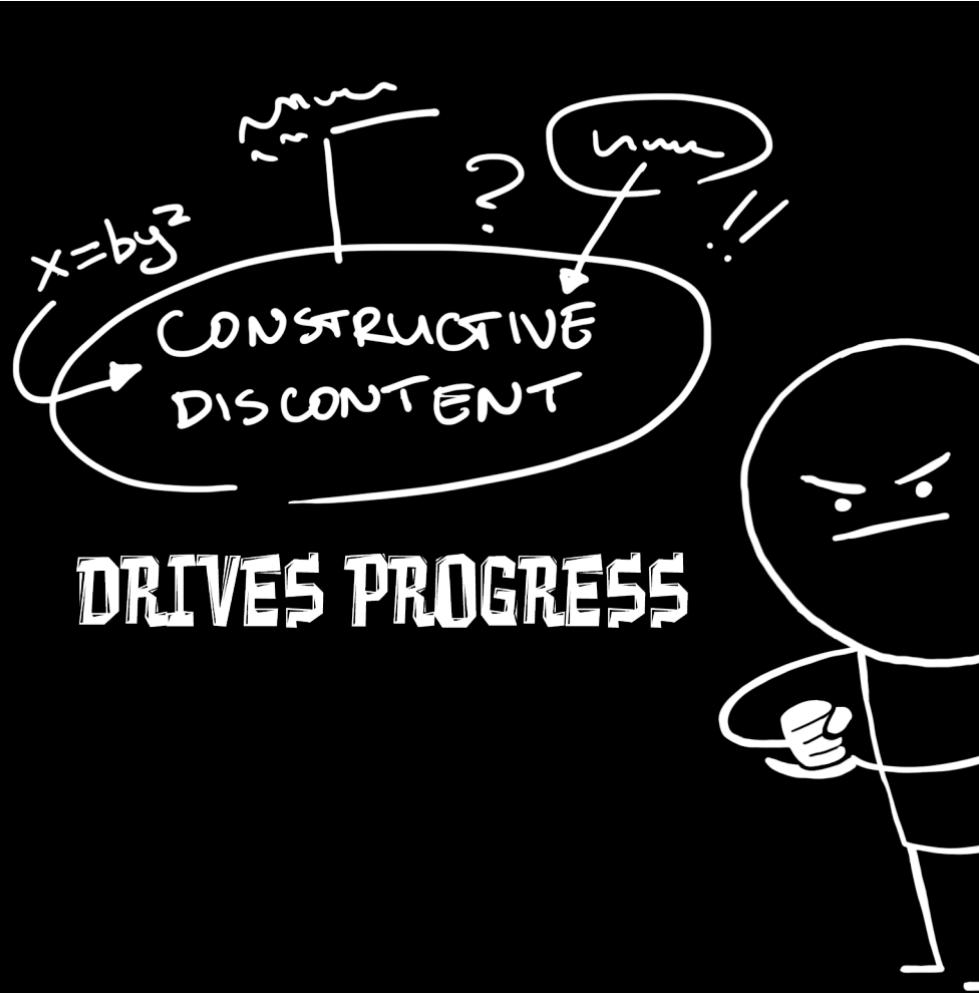
The word “innovation” has been rendered meaningless.

There are nearly half a million Google searches for the definition of innovation every month, and “innovative” is one of the top 5 overused buzzwords used on LinkedIn profiles (right up there with “dynamic” and “results-focussed”). Look through any business magazine or go to any conference and you can spend the whole day playing innovation-bingo. As I write this, the latest *Harvard Business Review* has come in. Written on the cover in bold is “How to Unleash Innovation,” as though it is some force that can be switched on. I know self-styled innovation management consultants* talk about turning organisations into “cauldrons of innovation” and generating “innovation ambassadors” and so on. It all gets a bit naff.

But beneath the fluff and the hype, innovation is simply about making changes to something that’s already established, so that it becomes significantly better. It could be about bringing in totally new products into a market or dramatically improving the ones that are already there. It could be about offering revolutionary new services or redesigning your internal business processes. Put simply, innovation is significant new improvement – something critical for all businesses.

If something is getting in the way of significant improvement occurring in your organisation... then you’ve got a bit of a problem. And it won’t be long before your best talent leaves and your clients turn to your more innovative competitors.

* Not that there’s anything wrong with a self-styled innovation management consultant!

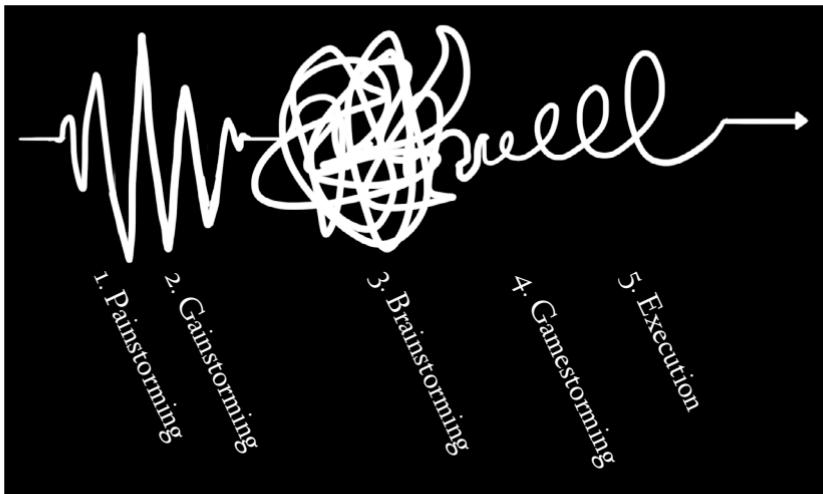


Edison, who said a lot of things relevant to executing innovation, once said that “discontent is the first necessity for progress.” Problems can be brilliant platforms to launch action towards significant improvement (aka innovation). In fact, it’s rather hard to innovate without knowing exactly why you’re innovating. Einstein stated that if he were to be given ten days to solve a problem, he’d spend the first nine days defining it. This process of problem-immersion is often skipped by business in the excitement to generate new ideas. In fact, one of the least effective things you can do is have a blue-sky thinking brainstorm session without first clearly defining your problem first.

Creativity and innovation are more than just doing a brainstorm session or attending a conference to gather new ideas. Over the next page, you’ll see a model that could describe a linear innovation process. Remember: all models are flawed, but some are quite helpful. Innovation is rarely a straightforward affair, but it can have distinct phases. In each phase, assumptions are challenged rigorously.

1. Painstorming. First, we must understand what the real problem is (whether it’s in our customer journey, our business process, our recruitment strategy, etc.) Through deep questioning of assumptions, we can move beyond symptoms and focus on the core issues and opportunities.

2. Gainstorming. Then, we build the case for undertaking the pursuit of innovation in this particular area. We extrapolate the tangible and intangible value, and begin to set audacious



(and fuzzy) goals.

3. Brainstorming. Now that we have a clear understanding of the problem and opportunities at play, we can begin to generate an abundance of ideas within our assumption-proof parameters. This is fuelled by a motivation to pursue the gains and fuzzy goals generated in the gainstorming session.

4. Gamestorming. Typically, most things stop with brainstorms. The abundant creativity ends, and the ideas are either lost to the void or handed over to a project manager to

slice, dice and delegate. In gamestorming, we hold on to the ideas and use crafted games to prototype and refine them. Gamestorming helps to iron out potential implementation failures and design flaws very early in the process (potentially saving huge money, time and potential embarrassment in the future). With creative juices still flowing, gamestorming also allows key players to build their execution gameplan. Gamestorming actually blends into the process of execution. Staying agile while rapidly prototyping ideas in increasingly bigger games, teams are able to finesse their ideas as they are implementing them.

5. Execution. This is where it all happens. By undertaking the four previous steps, you'll have a grounded idea that's well justified by the gains it could provide. You will have generated, synergised, selected and refined the best of your ideas into a solid, executable concept and you will have already prototyped and tested the idea and its implementation. You're good to go!



PLANNING TO PLAN

Step ① FIND PAPER

Step ② FIND PEN

Step ③ WRITE PLAN

Planning to not FAIL
is planning to FAIL

It's easy to invest time into planning: planning is safe; it allows us to be perfectionists, to procrastinate on action and to delay risk-taking. We convince ourselves that if we get the plan right, everything will flow. Measure twice, cut once. Nay! Measure thrice, cut once! Heck, why even cut at all... let's just plan it out.

But planning can very often get in the way of action and it's only through action that we evolve and progress our ideas. What we instead want to do is build opportunities for safe-failure into our plans, by rapidly prototyping our ideas. This means simply running with an idea, driving things forward and seeing what works. It's an iterative process that exists outside of sterile meeting rooms. It allows you to make progress while responding to changes, to free your ideas from the immovable shackles of perfect plans and to build something workable.

Einstein once said "anyone who's never made a mistake has never tried anything new." Failing early in a safe environment and then scaling up as the momentum around an idea grows is the only way to win in the long run. Taking any action, whatever it is, is the only way to validate our ideas with evidence, as opposed to investing our time in planning and guess work.

This is, of course, exactly what happens in any game – when you start, you make mistakes. At times, you make so many mistakes that you need to restart from scratch. But the thing is, you'll be wiser for it and will make better choices next time.

It's all about taking a playful approach within defined parameters. Let's call it "game-play".

In nature, play is an essential survival skill – we play to make mistakes and learn early. Having a feeling of “fun” is the brain’s way of rewarding us for play. And Einstein, ever the veritable source of good quotes, often argued that “play is the highest form of research.”

If we can apply a similar game-play approach to our real-world ideas and projects, we’ll be able to get to better thinking.





It's not your beliefs, goals or plans that drive you to achieve; it's progress. And games are all about progress.

In 2010, the *Harvard Business Review* published a fascinating research paper that prompted a good rethink about the way we support motivation at work. Originally, researchers Amabile and Kramer surveyed over 600 managers from dozens companies, asking them to rank workplace factors commonly considered significant to motivation. “Recognition of good work” was the clear winner among managers. Yet, the most significant factor for the employees – identified from a multi-year study of over 12,000 employee diary entries along with ratings of motivation and activity – was a sense of progress. And, ironically, it’s what the 600+ managers ranked dead last.

Science might have known about the origins of motivation for some time now, but, as Dan Pink used to say, “there’s a big gap between what science knows and what business does.” And many businesses continue to unquestioningly subscribe to conventional nonsense like:

–“Failing to plan is planning to fail,” which is false. In fact, the business strategy of the extremely successful Google is to have no business strategy at all. The company knows that; planning often gets in the way of action or locks you into the wrong path.

–“You can achieve anything, all you need to do is believe” – self-efficacy is important, but you can’t achieve positive change simply by thinking about it.

Even if you’ve got an idea, a plan and the belief to execute it, you still have a lot of work to

do. And that's fine, because work can be awesome if you get the progress part right. It's why World of Warcraft has millions of people paying money each month for the opportunity to engage in challenging, repetitive work. It's also why the Nike+ system for recording your running progress was such a huge success.

We are most happy when we can see that our efforts directly contribute to something meaningful.

So, here are the five critical design elements that sustain motivation and effort in games and how you can adapt them into your work:

1. Track it.

Of all online communities and social networks, LinkedIn has one of the highest levels of profile completion. This is mostly because of a nifty little progress bar which indicates your percentage of profile completion and gives suggestions on what to do to reach 100%.

2. Reduce feedback delay

Motivation declines when there is a long delay between effort and useful feedback, which makes sense, because when we don't know if our efforts are contributing to progress, we either stop working or put our time into an area where we can make progress (like checking emails). The quicker we get meaningful feedback, the sooner we can focus on making progress.

3. Balance gratification

You might have heard of the marshmallow study. The basic premise is that delayed gratification leads to success and at some level we can all see why that makes sense. If we were simply run by short-term gratification, it'd be beer and skittles all the time. So, we're told instead to work hard, save money and delay gratification.

But it doesn't have to be like this. You can actually blend both forms of gratification. Games do this very well: as you are leveling up and progressing your characters, you receive small acknowledgements and little token rewards. You progress the narrative, and this continues to fuel your motivation and effort.

Tim Ferris, the author of *The Four Hour Workweek*, gives an idea about how to build mini-rewards into your life. Rather than living what he calls the "delayed life plan," he advocates for frequent, mini-retirements instead.

The key here is to think not in terms of either short- or long-term gratification, but, rather, how short-term gratification (points, mini-rewards, hat-tips) can be used to reinforce your progress toward bigger gratification.

4. Celebrate wins

Sometimes it's easy to get caught up just focussing on the to-do list, without celebrating the wins you've achieved. For managers, stretching targets and changing goals makes it hard for your team to celebrate wins and achievements, which in turn will diminish their motiva-

tion to do work. In a good video game, you know what level you're at, and it's easy to mark your wins, achievements and progress. Behance, a creative agency based in New York, has a wonderful "DONE!" wall. It's a physical wall where they post everything they complete — they literally surround themselves with progress.

5. Maintain agility

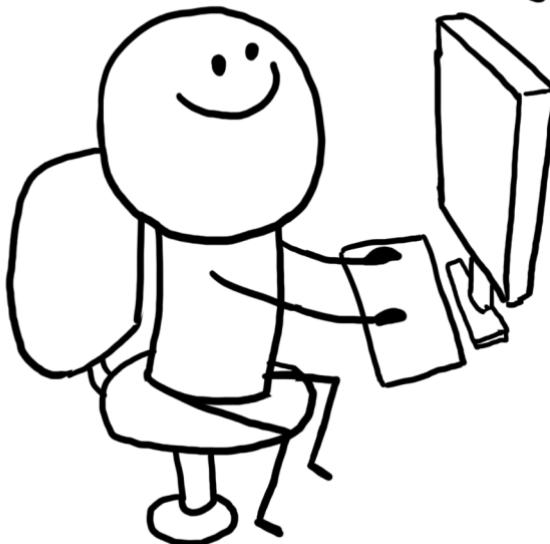
The path to innovation rarely follows a straight line, and your ability to make progress will depend on your ability to adapt to changes along the way. Many software developers know this and employ agile project methods to keep their people making progress.

Meaningful progress is the heart and core of all motivation and the whole point for doing work. If you're serious about building and sustaining the motivation in your team, make work more like a game.

Progress:
AWESOME!



Project Stage 3
Completed:
Stage 1
Stage 2



Fuzzy Goals are fine



Let's go back to our gap between thinking about potential innovation and actually achieving it. In academic language, goal setting is the process of facilitating constructive discontent between your current state and your desired future state.

For most projects, the desired future state is perfectly clear and you can almost reverse-engineer the steps you need to take in order to achieve it. But for innovation projects, the desired future state tends to be a bit... fuzzy. You know you need to take action and find a better way of doing things, and you've got this great idea... but the more you progress, the more your ideas morph and evolve. Nothing is straightforward; you can't simply sort innovation into delegatable tasks.

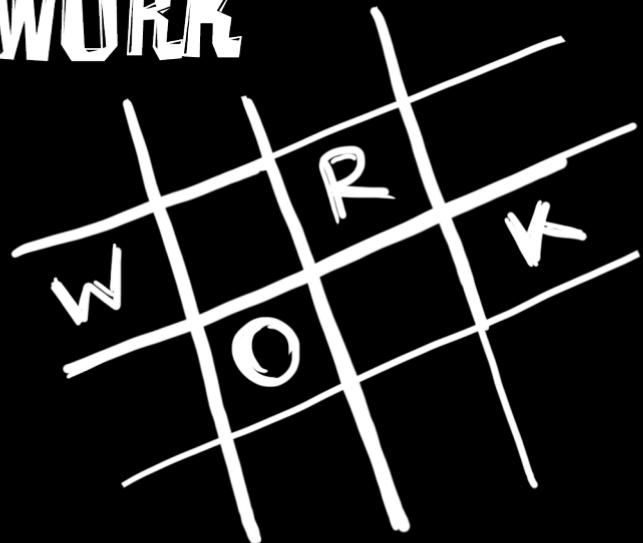
Classic project management and execution would stipulate that you need to know exactly what deliverables to achieve. You need to know when each bit is to be completed and by whom. You need to delegate and hold people accountable. You are taught to be smart about it, to be specific, realistic and time-based.

No wonder it's hard to be serious about innovation when there are no deliverables to check off, no clear ship time to adhere to and no conventional ways to indicate success.

So, what to do?

Well, the answer is to craft and to play better games.

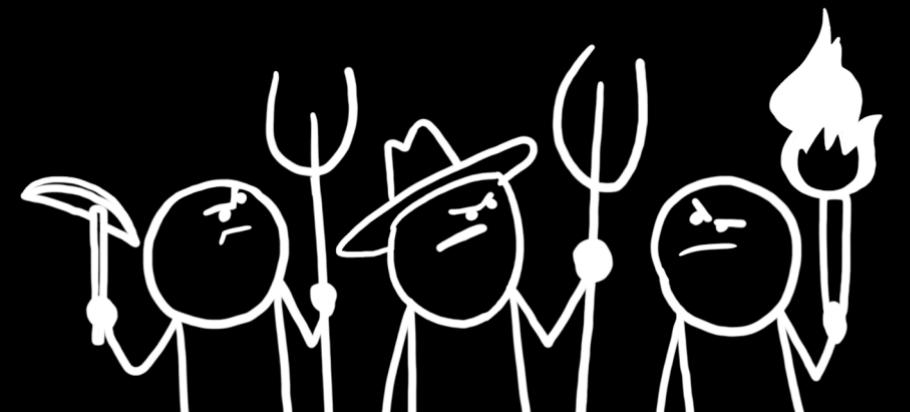
GAMES MAKE WORK



Yes, games. Those supposedly frivolous time-wasting things are the key ingredient to making ideas happen and getting things done. Especially when you don't know exactly what it is you are working towards and how you're going to get there. Having a clear plan is fantastic, but we should never let planning get in the way of doing. Failing to act is the real failure; everything else is just a lesson. Inspiration is toxic (without structure), ideas are useless (without action) and innovation is extremely challenging (without play).

Now, the odd thing about game-play is that humans are actually at their happiest when they are engaged in making progress on challenging work. And games give them that. It's much like how you will naturally avoid big, daunting tasks because you don't know where to start, so you go clean the house or check your email instead. In other words, you play a different game, where your effort is rewarded by clear feedback on your progress (cleaner house, less emails). But if we make those big, daunting yet important projects work more like a game, everything will work better and we'll actually get stuff done.

We FEAR and DISTRUST GAMES



It's hard to talk about games – and the power of purposeful play – when everyone is so morbidly serious. "This isn't a game" they say, as though we don't care enough. But then you'll catch them telling their sales team that they need to "lift their game." At conferences and events, you'll hear the line "we need to play a bigger game," and when anyone has been away from work or a project, they need to "get their head back in the game" in order to make progress.

It's all there in our language. When someone says "don't play games with me," they're tapping into our primal fear of games, that we may be manipulated by another person's game. And games are, at their core, behavioural manipulation: you have a set of parameters in place that will guide and direct your actions, towards a particular outcome. But that's only a bad thing if you're taking a back seat in the process.

The house always wins. And games always favour their maker. If you're not playing a part in designing the game you're playing, you're probably being played.

Goals, Rules, Feedback



Everything we do forms part of a game, but the best games have the following ingredients:

1. Clear goals and quests

All games have purpose – something to strive towards. This may be the pursuit of mastery, the solving of a problem, or the achievement of something brilliant. Every question literally begins with a quest, and good games provide the means to find the right answers.

2. Clear rules and parameters

Have you ever played a game where someone has tried to change the rules mid-game? All play stops until the disagreement is resolved, as games only ever work when everyone is seeing eye to eye about rules and parameters. And most often tighter parameters (budget, time, materials) will give rise to greater ingenuity.

3. Clear feedback and acknowledgement

When you're playing a good game, you'll know exactly how you're progressing, and it'll be clear what actions you can take to move the ball forward.

4. Artefacts and experience

After any finite game is concluded, all players will have increased experience. Sometimes, the artefacts that emerge within games can be used to benefit the bigger games we play (for example, participation in sporting games can build friendships and fitness, just like participating in brainstorming games can generate useful new ideas to implement in our business).

All of this is grounded in volition and choice. As philosopher James Carse states: “Anyone who must play, cannot play.”

In everything we do, at some level, there are goals, rules, ways of receiving feedback and experiences to be had. But we are remarkably unclear about this, and most of the games we play both at work and in life are terribly designed.

We mess with the games we play without realising how we are shaping them. Managers who offer a cash bonus to incentivise performance don’t realise that adding an extrinsic motivator like that can actually hobble their game. The intention is good, but adding an extrinsic motivator to the existing game will often only serve to diminish creativity and collaboration.

Many of the games we play are begging for a better design. Think about the game of education at school. Sure, there are goals, but is the goal to make students get good grades or promote good learning? Are teachers preparing students for the world they’ll grow up in or for the world they grew up in?

There’s definitely rules at school (but who do they favour?), there’s some feedback (usually in the dreadful form of sporadic test results and biannual report cards, in which all achievement is converted into a bunch of numbers) and there is some sort of artefact resulting from the game (a graduation certificate).

But it is far from ideal, and countless millions of students throughout the world continue to be disengaged from the school game.





Gamification is BIG in the northern hemisphere. According to a Gartner report published earlier this year, 100 of the top 135 global *Fortune 500* companies will already have serious gaming incorporated into their training. They also predict that by 2015, more than 50 percent of organisations will have gamified their innovation processes.

So there is a lot of hype about “gamification,” which is generally defined as the process of adding game-like mechanics to influence and reward real world activities. Typically, this takes the form of achievement badges, leaderboards and point-scoring systems, most commonly accessed online.

All sorts of folk are getting excited about this, and while there is a lot of merit and potential in this movement – and a great deal of overlap with applied gaming and gameful design – I see some serious pitfalls amongst the hype of gamification.

The first being that most of the gamification “noise” out there is focussed on enhancing business objectives... without necessarily providing any value to customers. Giving a token badge for sharing an advertisement is a hollow experience. Coca Cola has one particular website, whereby the more coke you drink, the more points you get. This is great for business, and the game-like mechanics will definitely influence consumer behaviour... but is drinking more coke a good thing?

People are smart. They can see through manipulative game-mechanics and if you’re not careful, you’ll cheapen your brand. Big time.

Just as you can't polish a turd*, you can't gamify a bad experience. The customer experience is the core thing to improve first and that comes through good game design, not just a sprinkling of game-like mechanics and points on top.

What exactly is the difference between "gamification," "gameful design," and the other related terms you will likely encounter? Like "advertising", "marketing" and "branding," they are distinctly different and at the same time often used interchangeably by people who don't know better.

So, let's get clear on a few things:

"Gamification" is perhaps the most popular term, used to describe the integration of game-like mechanics and dynamics to improve business processes or customer experience. While this can be all-reaching, its main application is generally limited to users engaged with online content.

"Serious Play" is best described as non-entertainment gaming, where two or more independent decision-makers seek to solve real problems and achieve objectives within clearly defined parameters and constraints.

"Advergaming" is when a brand pays a developer to make a game. Many companies mistak-

only think that advergaming will enhance acquisition of new customers, but this strategy is best used to retain and/or on-sell to an existing customer base.

"Gamestorming" is the process of using games to facilitate breakthrough thinking. You could think of it as brainstorming with games, but that sells it short. Gamestorming can be used to rapidly prototype new ideas and can aid the creation of team-generated game-plans to execute ideas.

"Gameful Design" is in some ways similar to gamification, but focusses more upon harnessing and directing our natural disposition to play in order to overcome challenges and achieve something meaningful. Think Volkswagen's Fun Theory, Quest to Learn or Find the Future. Gameful design attempts to capture the spirit of a game and not merely its mechanics.

We are only scratching the surface here. Good game design offers profound insights that, when applied, could unlock massive productivity, motivation and innovation within organisations... but it will always come back to good design and a deep understanding of the science of motivation.

* Although apparently Mythbusters got on to that one and proved that you can, indeed, polish a turd. My point still stands, though.

a gameful Approach to Education



One primary school in New York is attempting to change the game, and they've taken a gameful approach to designing a powerful learning environment for their students.

Quest to Learn is a school whose goal is to prepare digital learners for their new, uncertain future. They have built assessments around game design, whereby, just like in a video game, you can attempt to tackle any test or challenge, at any level, at any time and for as many times as you like.

This creates an experience where students learn by doing and failing and boy do they learn fast. They are able to operate at the edge of their ability, in flow, where nothing is so challenging that they'll get anxious (and fear tests, like most students do) or so easy that they'll get bored and disengaged, like many others who have to suffer through lessons at the pace of the teacher.

All of this is wrapped up in a strong narrative context, where the teachers are empowered and the students are continuously acknowledged for their efforts and achievements, where the environment enhances competitively cooperative performance, and where they are encouraged to be the architects of their future and the games they play.

a gameful Approach to Recruitment



Normally, when a company needs to hire someone, they turn to a recruitment agency and/or post a job advertisement online and in the newspaper. It's a pretty standard affair: they'll list the skills, qualifications and years of experience they're looking for and spruce it up with their meaningless company mission statement and diversity policy.

So potential applicants then go fluff up their cover letters and resumes, exaggerating the truth about their experience and priming their references to say nice things. If they progress to interviews, they're prepared for the standard swag of questions like "what has been your biggest achievement" and "describe your main weakness" (it's always perfectionism, that one). Then they'll be short listed into a small group of people who can do the recruitment game quite well. But are they the right talent-match? Can they actually contribute, perform and add value?

In 2006, Google took a different approach to recruitment. They wanted to get smart people who were naturally curious and inclined to go out of their way to solve tough puzzles. So they placed a billboard on the Route 101 highway that links the Silicon Valley to San Francisco. But rather than show their logo and reveal who they were, Google kept the ad in plain black and white.

All that read was: {first 10-digit prime found in consecutive digits of e}.com

The number e has a lot of digits in it. It looks something like this: 2.718281828459045235360287471352662497757247093699959574966967627724076630353547594571382178525166427427466391932003059921817413596629043572900334295260595630738132328627943490763233 and so on...

The answer to this horrendously complex math equation was 7427466391 (the first 10-digit prime number found in consecutive digits of e, see if you can find it above).

It's hard enough to work out the first 10-digit prime number, let alone the first 10-digit one found in the number e! But the select few Silicon Valley drivers who could solve this puzzle made it to the right website, 7427466391.com... where they then encountered yet another riddle in this mysterious game. Solving the next led to another web page, where it was finally revealed that Google were looking to recruit. It was only at this stage that they were invited to submit their curriculum vitae to Google.

Google built a game around recruitment that naturally selected the right people for the job. They weren't interested in the countless thousands that simply drove past the challenge. Nor were they interested in people submitting crafted CVs that exaggerate their talent. Talent was a natural pre-selector in this game.

Can you see? The game was already there. They just got clear on the goals and changed the rules to get the best outcome.

a *gameful* Approach to Customer Loyalty

Here's another commercial example of good game design applied to enhance consumer loyalty: Qantas, Australia's largest international and domestic airline.

The meta-game Qantas plays is quite simple – make money moving people from one city to another, using planes. Their business goal would be to get more people flying more often with them and not with their competitors. Now, they could try reducing the price of their tickets, but then they'd have to start cutting costs everywhere, cheapening both the customer experience and the brand. On the flipside, they could invest in better food and inflight service, and spend more money on advertising... but then that's just going to increase the costs.

Most customers just want to fly comfortably at the best price they can. The frills of good food and other luxuries come second to the economic decision. But at the same time, customers don't want to get stuffed around.

So, Qantas, like many other airlines, enhanced the game of flying with them, rewarding frequent flyers with redeemable frequent flyer points that can be exchanged for more flights or products. This in itself is a simple game mechanic that has been used in countless formats.

But Qantas also added status points, which accumulate to grant you privileges, like entry to the exclusive Qantas Club lounge, express check-in lines and preferential seating. These status points are very similar to experience point systems used in role-playing games, where more experience points allow you to level up and unlock new powers. In this game, the more you play with Qantas, the more rewards you get, and the more both parties win.

a gameful Approach to Saving Lives

1UP

Every year, millions of dollars are spent on advertising, education and signage to encourage safer driving and to reduce road accidents and deaths. Driving is always a dangerous game and the risks are exceptionally real. Every year more money is spent, but, despite our efforts, many people continue to drive above safe speed limits.

A new “speed camera lottery” was designed and implemented by Volkswagen as part of its Fun Theory project. In this game, all cars are photographed. Those going over the speed limit are fined, while those driving safely are entered into a prize pool – a prize pool that is funded by the fines of speeding drivers!

This game did several things to enhance the existing game of driving:

1. It enhanced the goal of safer driving by giving clear and helpful feedback, and by acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour, while punishing bad one.
2. It allowed drivers to recognise that they are part of a bigger game: speeders realise that not only do they cop a fine, but also miss out on the chance to cash in.
3. It uses the “variable ratio” game mechanic, a compelling psychological technique used in lottery-type games, in which you can’t predict if you will win, you just know that you’ve got to be in it to win it (that is, your behaviour must conform to the rules of the game, in order to benefit).

The average speed of drivers before the speed camera lottery game was implemented was 32km/h. During the experiment, the average speed dropped to 20km/h, making the artefact of this game a reduction of 37.5% in the average driving speed! Think about the number of ad campaigns and billboards that barely make a difference.

Volkswagen believe that “fun can change behaviour for the better”. I love the intent, but I disagree with the wording. Fun isn’t what changes behaviour – it’s people who change their behaviour, based upon the games they’re playing. Fun is the experience of a well-designed game that influences behaviour in a playful way.

a gameful Approach to Customer Experience ☺

If you're Nike, having people running and improving their fitness is good for business. Which means you've got three main goals:

1. Get more people running
2. Get them running more frequently and further
3. Get them running using your stuff and not your competitors' products.

Now, you could go about achieving these goals by picking from the standard swag of marketing tools – celebrity endorsements, advertising and product placements, and so on – but Nike was already spending billions on this. And besides, all those things will do is get people to buy their stuff. It won't get people wearing them out and having a positive brand experience.

So, Nike partnered up with Apple to literally build a game layer on top of the existing customer experience and called it Nike+. Customers who buy shoes featuring a slot for a small iPod-syncing sensor can measure the pace, distance and duration of their run. This data is then displayed as a rich visualisation on a personal home page, where the joggers can track their performance, set their own exercise goals and see how well they are improving. Needless to say, the sensor only fits select Nike shoes, thus eliminating the competition.

Nike+ is a great way to enhance performance by introducing a game element that lets users

set clear goals, determine rules and receive useful feedback. What is this but the ultimate performance-enhancing game? But it gets even better. In this game, players can share their results with their friends and family (adding positive social pressure – a powerful game dynamic), and can also participate in competitions, where they can challenge a friend anywhere in the world to a race. Nike also runs regular multi-city races – all synced in the Nike+ program. These charity events are purported to be some of the world's largest single-day running events.

All of this adds to a rich brand experience, where the game supports both the personal goals of the user and the business goals of the provider. Which brings me to an important distinction that needs to be made – do we call this gamification, or do we call this the application of good game design?

Like An Agile Ninja Scientist



It's one thing to have a good game to work in, but we cannot get too attached to it. If something's not working, we need to be able to step back and tweak the design, just like an agile ninja scientist.

Agile. Agile is a funky management philosophy that is used by many software development companies. Agile project management is based on iterative and incremental development, where requirements and solutions evolve through collaboration between self-organizing, cross-functional teams.

Unlike clunky top-down approaches to executing ideas, agile teams can change course and evolve their execution to new needs very quickly. In fact, much of agile work revolves around the organisation of short, focussed “sprints” (well-defined and intense work-games that chip away at project milestones).

Ninja. Ninjas always find the path of least resistance: they'll sneak past guards, scale walls, and use secret tunnels. They are not daunted by temporary failure. The old Bushido adage of “what does not kill you only makes you stronger” can apply to the execution of new ideas – yesterday’s failure is today’s lesson and tomorrow’s blessing. Plus ninjas are cool.

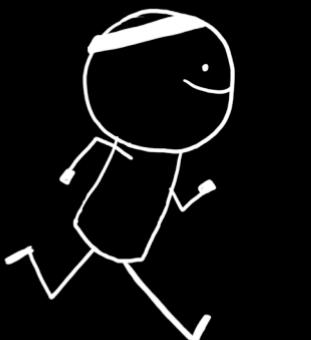
Scientist. When scientists come across new ideas they get curious. They look at the published literature to see what has been done before, and they increase their knowledge. They then build games (experiments) to test the validity of ideas. They make decisions based on evidence, not merely belief.

The Whole World's a Game

Energy: 20/28



Free time: 4/16



William Shakespeare once said that “all the world’s a stage”. I’m sure if he were around today, he’d probably call it a game. The gameful action model is a helpful concept to keep in mind in any game. If you’ve ever found yourself in an argument with someone, you can almost do the double dissociation thing and think “righto, which actions are going to progress things in the best direction?”

In business this may manifest as the 12 minute stand-up meetings used by many agile software developers, in which each team member gives a short update on their progress before the team launches into their daily, fortnightly or monthly “sprint” or mini-quest. They craft and play productive finite games to execute their ideas.

Google have got such a strong innovation game happening that they sometimes get someone playing the role of (reverse) court Jester in their meetings. Traditionally, the jester was the only one who could challenge the decisions of the king (through humour and without offence, giving rise to the adage “a lot of truth is said in jest”). For Google, their meeting-room Jesters are the ones who reign in creatives when they get too carried away from convention, focussing thoughts back onto implementation.

There are wizards (system-thinkers), warriors (steadfast executors) and sages (scientific thinkers), hunters (sales) and gatherers (networkers) and many roles at play within your organisation. We all have a role to play. What’s yours?



DECLARE A WAR ON JUST BECAUSE

What are you playing at?

Have you ever had that experience of returning home after a long holiday to think: "I can't believe how messy this house is"? We don't notice the dust beginning to accumulate along with the insidious entropy until we get a new perspective.

Now, when was the last time you had a fresh look at your business processes?

The difference here is that most people spend most of their time working in the business. It's only those rare conferences and retreats where you get to look back on what you are doing from a new perspective. At all other times, you're in the game, and potentially blind to the opportunities that surround you.

Sometimes it pays to get someone in who is completely naive to your business and industry. Why? Because they will bring a totally fresh perspective.

If you were to get an expert with twenty years of experience in your industry, they'll also be blinded by the game they're playing. You want someone to come in and ask those seemingly dumb but powerfully wise questions like: "Why is everyone working in a cubicle?" and "Why aren't your actions steps captured in your meetings, and why do they take so long?", and "Why aren't these two guys collaborating and sharing that resource?", and so on.

If you find yourself thinking "I don't know why we do it that way... it's just the way we do it" then you've got yourself a new mission – find out why!

If there is no purpose to an activity, it's just a timewaster. But if you discover something's true purpose (be it a reason for longer meetings or a reason for particular desk layouts), you'll then be able to take a gameful approach to improving it. You'll be able to challenge the inherent assumptions that are contributing to lower productivity and you'll be able to eliminate some of the barriers to innovation.

Cut the fat from your business processes. Give them a spring clean, and while you're at it, improve the game you're playing. Focus on the things that will best serve your business goals.

Remember, the house always wins. And games always favour their maker. If you're not playing a part in designing the game you're playing, you're probably being played.

In the old days (1980's), games would only give you three lives. Unless you get some 1ups (extra lives), it would be game over. Modern games have checkpoints, regenerating health and armour, and the ability to save our progress at any time. This means we can always experiment, play and learn, without any fear of having to completely restart – if things don't work out, we'll simply go back to our last checkpoint.

Businesses need to take a very similar approach. A good gameplan can get you rapidly prototyping and safely executing brilliant ideas, to accelerate innovation.

There's no excuse to not innovate – all you need is an agile, scientific, ninja-like and gameful approach. There is no more game over – only game on!

500+ MILLION GAMERS SPEND 3 billion HOURS PLAYING ONLINE VIDEO GAMES EACH WEEK

GAMERS ARE, ON AVERAGE
35 YEARS OLD AND HAVE BEEN PLAYING FOR OVER 10 YEARS
AND BY 2014, THE AVERAGE AGE OF GAMERS WILL BE EQUAL TO THE AGE OF NON-GAMERS

VIDEO GAMES ARE THE FASTEST GROWING INDUSTRY IN AUSTRALIA

OF ALL THE TIME SPENT ON FACEBOOK, 40% IS SPENT PLAYING VIDEO GAMES.
THINK TWITTER IS BIG? THERE ARE MORE PEOPLE PLAYING FARMVILLE... AND THAT'S JUST *ONE* GAME!

SOURCED FROM BRW, POPCAP, ESA AND IBISWORLD INDUSTRY REPORTS (AUSTRALIA)

GAMERS ARE MORE PHYSICALLY AND SOCIALLY ACTIVE THAN NON-GAMERS
47% OF GAMERS ARE FEMALE
IN FACT, THERE ARE MORE ADULT FEMALE GAMERS THAN THERE ARE MALE TEENAGE GAMERS. AND IF WE LOOK AT THE 100+ MILLION SOCIAL GAMERS, OVER HALF ARE FEMALE, WITH AN AVERAGE AGE OF 43!

70% OF C-LEVEL EXECUTIVES ADMIT TO REGULARLY PLAYING GAMES WHILE AT WORK (MORE THAN ANY OTHER LEVEL)
THE 2ND BIGGEST KNOWLEDGE BASE IN THE WORLD (AFTER WIKIPEDIA) IS DEVOTED TO WORLD OF WARCRAFT – 80K+ ARTICLES ARE VIEWED BY MORE THAN 5 MILLION EACH MONTH

CASE STUDIES

Here follows some examples of what could be collectively called “gamification”. Some of these examples have several design flaws, and many are skewed to the northern hemisphere. Consider them not to be the gold standard of applied gameful design, but merely a collection of case studies in how game design is being used to enhance results.

LEARNING TO GAME AND GAMING TO LEARN: GAME BUILDING AND THE GAMIFICATION OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Kids today are more immersed in technology than any generation before. But this isn't to say that youngsters are lining up to pursue careers in research biology or aerospace engineering. The reality is that many young people find that math and science are as off-putting as ever, opting to keep those daunting subjects at arm's length whenever possible.

The Game Design through Mentoring and Collaboration program (GDMC) sought to change that, employing the use of one of the great common denominators of kids today: video games. Students in the program, ranging from ages nine to nineteen, were given a scientific concept with the task of creating a video game that demonstrated and explained the given concept through gameplay that is involved, engaging, educational and most importantly – fun!

This approach to education is a great example of applied gameful design, one that creates ac-

cessibility to the assigned topics through a participatory environment. Students can analyse and understand a concept, and then bring that understanding to life through the creation of their own new game, applying those concepts to create their own contribution to education and gaming.

In short, the GDMC program demonstrates that virtually any concept, any idea, any type of information can be made all the more palatable when digested through a gamified format. Any fun game has to be learned to be played, and a user is all the more willing to learn something new when it's conveyed through engaging gameplay.

<http://bit.ly/yxOMHk>

“I'M A LEVEL-TEN TECH TEAM-PLAYER WIZARD”: ROLE-PLAY GAMING AND A GOOD WORK ETHIC

If you were to tell someone that you became an expert marksman because you'd spent a lot of time playing Duck Hunt on Nintendo as a child, you might be laughed right off the firing range. Unless the person you told this to was tech company CEP Elliot Noss, that is. If you told Noss, he might ask you why Duck Hunt was the only game you applied to real life.

You see, Noss is a big fan of the role-playing game World of Warcraft, a whimsical fantasy game where thousands of devotees go on quests together to achieve any number of odd sounding goals. In fact, he loves it so much that he hosts a regular lunchtime meeting at his

company that utilizes the gameplay of World of Warcraft to teach leadership lessons to his employees. Noss demonstrates that the challenges in the game are a perfect allegory to the challenges in the professional and business world, showing that:

- Video games can help condition employees to handle unexpected challenges and new situations.
- Games can train a person to organize and manage large amounts of information.
- Games can inspire positive and good-natured competitiveness among fellow employees.
- Collaborative decision-making and teamwork found in games like World of Warcraft are integral to a productive work place.

There is zero unemployment in World of Warcraft, and many elements of this game's design can be translated to real work practices.

<http://onforbes.com/jicaT>

LOW-HANGING FRUIT CAN BE THE HEALTHIEST SNACK: GAMEFUL HEALTH MANAGEMENT

Diet and exercise is something that everyone can agree on. Well, agree to talk about. The truth of the matter is that words come easier than actions when it comes to health. It can be difficult to stay on the ball when trying to make lifestyle changes, and when that delicious

fried snack is in front of you, it's nearly impossible to see the big picture and opt for a healthy piece of fruit.

Online resources and games such as Health Month and Daily Mile have proved that when an actual piece of fruit isn't enough, offering some low-hanging fruit does the trick. This entails offering virtual points and awards to participants, who in effect are competing with each other by seeing who can do the most to become the healthiest quicker than the others. What this approach accomplishes is creating a more enjoyable process. Just as people may be inclined to find exercise through organized sports as opposed to committing hours to a gym, those dabbling in diet and exercise are all the more likely to stay on track if there is a structure.

Using points provides meaningful feedback in a process that usually takes months, if not years to see real results. When a mobile element is introduced via smartphones, creating around-the-clock participation, good gamification might be just what the doctor ordered to help those working towards better health.

<http://lat.ms/ftHaqt>

www.healthmonth.com

www.dailymile.com

ACCLIMATING NEW STUDENTS TO UNIVERSITIES WITH SCVNNGR

First-year orientation is often an overwhelming experience for new university students. Where to get food, school supplies, where to have fun, where to meet people, what to do – it's a whole lot to take in, and knowing where to start is difficult.

The Google Ventures-backed location-based startup SCVNNGR has changed the approach to solving this problem for thousands of students. SCVNNGR goes beyond the simple “check-in” premise inherent to most location-based platforms. It allows participating organizations and merchants to develop and build their own scavenger hunts, requiring participants to visit locations, try certain foods, take pictures and perform tasks.

SCVNNGR’s partnership with over 350 universities demonstrates that the gamification of college orientation could be the new norm. Combining virtual rewards like points and badges with tangible ones such as free college memorabilia encourages students to interact with their campus and each other in a fun, engaging, and thoughtful way that drives engagement with their university on every level, both virtual and physical.

TASTI D-LITE AND FOURSQUARE

One might argue that it doesn’t take a whole lot to get someone out of the house into a frozen yogurt shop. But where’s the vision in that? Masters of “froyo” Tasti D-Lite have taken it upon themselves to not only play to peoples’ innate desire to indulge in something sweet, but

also indulge them in the sweet satisfaction of playing an on-going game every time a purchase is made.

Tasti D-Lite’s gameful approach to its loyalty program has turned the punch card mentality of customer rewards on its head. By making frozen yogurt enthusiasts work for their free treat through the competitive check in framework of Foursquare, Tasti D-Lite is reaping the benefits of free advertising every time a user checks in. Meanwhile, customers are happy to be goading their friends into a little tasty competition over accumulated points and free dessert. Sounds like everyone wins in this game, no?

<http://bit.ly/6qjY14>

<http://on.mash.to/y3IlNB>

<http://on.mash.to/xxvFjf>

YELP: A GAME OF CROWD-SOURCED VINDICTIVENESS

Some games are not all fun and games. The crowd-sourced review site Yelp incorporates many gameful elements in its execution: royalty-esque titles, spy-like location-based searching, the accumulation of a network of friends, and the ability to review and rate businesses. Though it is not encouraged officially per say, Yelp’s own brand of game-type use is unique in a particular quality: its vindictiveness.

To many, Yelp is not only a tool. It’s a weapon. A consumer won’t just use Yelp to simply

locate a business; if they feel slighted in the least by an establishment in question, a scathing review will be written and shared with that user's entire Yelp network. What Yelp accomplishes in this gameful approach to business reviews is the creation of a truly competitive atmosphere—between user and business, user and user. What does Yelp reap from this? They own the competitive-collaborative experience. From the recommendation to the condemnation, the whole game is happening on Yelp, and people are eager to play.

ALLRECIPES.COM: A RECIPE FOR FUN?

Cooking—regardless of era or culture—tends to be a shared experience. Recipes passed down through generations, dishes shared at potlucks, tips swapped between housemates—is it not natural that recipe sharing online would take a similar form?

Sites such as AllRecipes.com incorporate a gameful approach to recipe sharing on the internet. Users post their own recipes, while others rate and review them. Users can also add their own suggestions, tips, and variations of the recipe, creating an exchange that has all the perks of a restaurant crawl and the all the power of a food critic.

The gameful, contribution-begetting-contribution model for the site creates a setting where foodies don't just simply look up a recipe, but help decide the popularity and modifications of that recipe. Having too many cooks in the kitchen has taken on a new and collaborative meaning. www.allrecipes.com

RECORD SHOPPING IN GAGAVILLE

The record store of yesteryear has fast become an anachronism as digital formats become the new norm. But where's the fun in buying music on iTunes? Pirating music illegally might offer thrills to some, but there is still little real satisfaction to be had. There's nothing inherently sexy or physical or daring to it. So, who better to bring the modern music buying experience a little flair than Lady Gaga?

Gaga, always one to go where her fans are, opened a "farm" within Farmville, online game maker Zynga's hit social media game. In an effort to promote her new album "Born This Way", she has turned to a form of in-game advertising. Visitors play games and contests in Gagaville that lets them vie for tickets to Lady Gaga concerts and exclusive access to new songs and remixes. In the absence of the true retail experience, Zynga and Gaga have created a fitting alternative, one that allows fans to truly experience their purchases, games, and entertainment.

<http://tcrn.ch/xlhxF>

<http://bit.ly/jWqglZ>

CROWD-SOURCED DIRT DIGGING: GAMES IN PARTICIPATORY JOURNALISM

There is perhaps no more of a one-way experience than reading the newspaper. Even online, there's little that a journalistic outlet can do. A comment section here, a user-oriented blog

there, but in the end it's not quite a conversation, and there's little a reader can do but read. The Washington Post was perhaps the first to challenge this notion head on.

After what was construed as a suspiciously long wait for the release of one-time vice presidential candidate and American culture warrior Sarah Palin's emails during her time as governor of Alaska, the Washington Post was chomping at the bit to dive in and start digging up dirt. The Post was so eager, in fact, that they decided to enlist the help of their readers to analyze the 24,000 emails. Thousands signed up online and were called on to report their findings. And just like that the news became a game, a two-way street—and readers came barreling down the pike.

More than anything, this approach to news-making channels the collaborative, teamwork-oriented mentality of many types of gameplay. Furthermore, a contributing reader is devoting their teamwork to a particular team: the Washington Post. This sort of unprecedented game-like participation is what makes this new approach so newsworthy.

<http://bit.ly/xZ7fub>

<http://thedc.com/zdecsw>

<http://politi.co/jAmhLZ>

PLAYING GAMES WITH THE PRESIDENT

Foursquare, the industry-leading location-based service, has added a game-layer to the world. Mayorships, check-ins, badges, and more recently, crowd-sourced tips on participating locations all make up a fun game bridging the physical and the digital.

It's all so fun that even US President Obama has joined in. Foursquare followers of the President can see where he is checking in and what tips he's left about those respective locations. It creates a first-hand narrative that the public can participate in, allowing them to follow the President both digitally and physically, learning his insights to his destinations. It's like a presidential round of the hit educational game "Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego."

A public figure of this level participating with people in a game setting is unprecedented. Not only does it give credence and validation to the gamified approach to marketing, it creates the expectation that these type of interactions, these game-like and participatory experiences will be a given, not only in marketing, but in politics, food, health—in people's entire lives.

<http://on.mash.to/Ab5R8y>

OKCUPID IS PLAYING GAMES WITH YOUR HEART

Dating sites are weird. But you know what? People use them, and the reality is that a lot more people will be using them as time goes on. The world is living out more and more of

life online, and if keeping people interested is the goal, then keeping them entertained and engaged better be high priorities.

OkCupid is a shining beacon of taking what people are already trying to do (meet people), putting it online, and then reintroducing it to the masses anew and awash in gameful design. Users fill out a profile that is analyzed for keywords, upwards of hundreds of questions are answered, and they upload their most flattering and enticing pictures. Then the fun begins. Users are sent three others' profiles in their "quiver," where they're encouraged to rate and write those people. Users can also play "quickmatch," where a succession of profiles are quickly viewed and rated. If a user gives a high rating to another, and that user awards the same rating to them, they'll both be notified. Hot, no? Maybe.

What many may not realize—or may not want to realize—is that they've signed up for the game of speed dating. And admit it or not, they love it. OkCupid's gamified approach to online dating has grown it in speed and usership more than any other online dating site. The gameplay and short term rewards from ratings and quickmatch bring satisfaction and fun to the user that keeps them interested and engaged—even if Cupid's arrow doesn't immediately strike.

<http://on.mash.to/yaavbX>

www.okcupid.com

<http://nyti.ms/dbgbon>

GAMIFIED BILLBOARDS

Billboards increasingly come off as passé in our digital-driven online era. Yet, the physical prevails. While we may be nose-deep in our smartphones, we do in fact have to look up and participate in the world around us. And what do we see when we do? Ads. Billboards simply seem like part of the landscape and are easily ignored. If it's not truly engaging, it's just pollution.

McDonald's provides one of a growing array of examples that show that this passive approach to the physical will continue to be the norm. Using geo-location smart phone technology, McDonald's created a game that linked a player's smartphone with a digital billboard placed in a town square, turning the player's phone in to a video game controller, manipulating the game on the screen. Allowing gameplay to exist in a real physical setting. With the reward of free food and the fun of playing a game, this type of gamified billboard engages its audience in ways that a traditional advertisement never could.

<http://on.mash.to/xkitQC>

<http://on.mash.to/wZJtEr>

GROUPON LIVING SOCIAL

If cutting coupons is a game, then it isn't a very good one. The clipping and cutting, the arguable indignity of going into a store and staking your claim to some minuscule savings—it's

just a downer. Coupon cutting parties are really just something you see too often these days. But saving big on a vacation, a manicure, a new suit—that's something worth sharing with others. Social shopping sites such as Groupon and Living Social bring that excitement and sharing into their game-inspired business model.

Deals are coordinated with participating merchants, and then the games are on: subscribers receive notifications of the deals, and with niche variations on this model—they pass on the deal to as many people as possible using their online social networks. In some cases a certain number of users must purchase the deal in order to unlock the savings. In others, if enough people buy an offer under your recommendation, yours is free. But in all cases, sharing the savings becomes the game, and the rewards are plentiful and effective for both buyer and merchant.

<http://bit.ly/z5nG62>

<http://bit.ly/yv2CLz>

www.groupon.com

www.livingsocial.com

STARBUCKS REWARDS CARD

A free sandwich after you buy nine? Sure, why not? Everyone loves free stuff, but would call it a reward? To most people, a reward is something that takes a little effort and requires a little cause and effect, like the rewards given in a game. You do something, and then you get something

in return. It's the same mentality as playing a video game, but giving away a free sandwich every now and then hardly resembles the fun of a game.

Starbucks is one company that has taken this understanding and turned it into a masterful execution of a gamified rewards program. Those participating enter at the same level, earning a free birthday drink. To get more out of the program, users must frequent Starbucks enough to graduate to the Green Level, earning free milks, syrups, and other perks. Entering the Gold Level earns access to new and exclusive offers.

And how do customers move through this system? By earning stars (which are earned through spending money, of course). Starbucks has brought a classic level-up game dynamic to its rewards program, bringing the joy of a Sonic the Hedgehog-esque videogame coin grab to an everyday coffee sale.

<http://on.mash.to/ydUHaK>

<http://bit.ly/kYRLzY>

NETFLIX

In the slow passing of the local video rental store, and then of the video rental chain, Netflix has stepped in to fulfill the role of making movie watching at home an experience unto itself. And they've embraced a game-like approach to this.

As users watch movies, they have more and more opportunities to rate and review their

choices, giving between zero and five stars. The more movies reviewed, the more Netflix can analyse a user's tastes and recommend films accordingly. The system even goes as far as presenting films with an estimation of the user's rating, as well as creating and offering new genres for the user, such as "foreign political comedies with a strong female lead".

The experience becomes a gameful cause and effect, creating an experience that allows the user to create their own tailored interface. Like any good game, it pays off to really play.

<http://bit.ly/xOmTP4>

www.netflix.com

LINKEDIN PROFILE COMPLETION

LinkedIn is in many ways a high-stakes Facebook. And like Facebook, a simple empty profile yields no rewards. But with LinkedIn's higher stakes comes greater rewards. This is the life-blood of their business, so it obviously behooves LinkedIn to ensure that people are actually and properly filling out their profiles.

That's why it makes so much sense that they employed game-like design in that process. Users are walked through step by step, importing resumes, reaching out to contacts, filling in expertise—always being led to the next step in the process. And when you break from the uncompleted process, a sidebar will remain on-screen, informing the user of the tasks that remain, as well as what percentage of a completed profile they represent.

<http://on.mash.to/zAtwxo>
<http://bit.ly/waE9cr>
www.linkedin.com

INTERACTIVE SHOPPING WITH QR CODES

For those unfamiliar with the concept of a pop-up shop, a brief explanation: it is a short term physical space, quite often a retail space, that is set up with the purpose of achieving a certain goal or ends. In the case of the non-profit organization Oxfam, this was to raise money by selling second-hand clothes donated by celebrities in order to raise money for their works. The idea is novel, but a little cut and, well—dry. Old clothes are just old clothes, unless you give them a story. Oxfam made sure to do just that.

Utilizing QR codes—which in effect are highly complex barcodes readable by most smartphones—placed on a garment's tag, the story of the garment is brought to life in a video narrative by the celebrity that donated the item, viewable on the smartphone of the scanning shopper. QR codes, easily made and interjected onto both print and video, as well as more creative places, can involve consumers desiring more information in a game-like, participatory process that brings a satisfying physical element to nearly any promotion or campaign.

<http://on.mash.to/wAmO2X>

MINT.COM

For far too many of us, the closest that we come to playing a game when related to finances is shifting around money to dodge an overdraft charge. Mint.com wants you to stop playing games with your finances and start treating your finances like a game—a game you want to win.

After entering financial variables and spending habits, Mint.com's gamified user interface comes to life. The program makes suggestions and offers visualizations of your finances to help you become more monetarily "fit", creating game-driven challenges to pay off credit cards, manage debt, pay for a vacation, and more. This approach, relying heavily on concrete challenges and visualizations, has become an obsession to many, and is a stunning example of game-driven mechanics driving interest and participation where it was once seldom found.

<http://on.mash.to/zA9w8t>

<http://bit.ly/zkONVd>

DOMINO'S ORDER TRACKER

Ordering pizza can be agonizing. The awkward phone conversation and the waiting are only redeemed by the fact that getting delivery means that you don't even have to leave the house. Pizza delivery chain Domino's sought to make the worst of an otherwise savory experience a little more palatable.

Domino's created their online ordering services utilizing an approach that satisfies the one of the most basic desires of any gamer: to get to the next level. After selecting an order and submitting address and payment, online customers can witness birth of their pizza in action. With the Domino's Order Tracker, the progress bar is updated as the order moves to the next step. From prep to baking to quality check to delivery, the customer is informed the exact moment their pizza moves to next step. Instead of suffering through radio silence after the order is placed, the customer gets to experience the whole process as if they were playing a video game, moving to the next level with the completion of the previous. This approach to online ordering manages to alleviate the anticipation of the process while simultaneously heightening it, helping to fill the void between ordering and enjoying, while bringing more satisfaction to the entire process.

<http://bit.ly/wtahaC>

www.dominos.com

KICKSTARTER

Artists, entrepreneurs, and do-gooders so often find their dreams and ambitions unfulfilled. Too often it is a simple and singular problem that stands in their way: how to finance their project. To simply solicit donations is ineffective and uninspiring, and seeking grant money is difficult and often futile. Start-up company Kickstarter has created an invaluable resource for

these aspirants through excellent use of game design.

Those seeking donations post proposals for their project, often incorporating a video to plead their case and describe their goals. A total monetary goal is set, and if this goal is not reached within a certain amount of time, none of the donations are processed, though this goal is by no means a cap on what can be donated. What truly drives the whole process are its game-minded elements: the progress bar and the pledge gifts.

Those who are interested in the project can see the amount raised in real-time, and as a project nears its goal, there is a satisfaction in helping to push it over the top. Those posting projects must also create gifts that correlate with the amount donated. In the case of one aspiring illustration-driven performance art piece, “Anyone who donated a dollar to the effort would get to watch a live stream of the whole five-day shebang. Anyone who pledged \$10 or more would get to name an animal for inclusion in the artwork; donations of \$20 or more would get an actual piece of the ink-filled paper sent to them. And backers who fronted \$1,000 or more would get an absinthe-infused lunch with the artist.”

The Kickstarter system has proven to be a huge success, with tens of millions of dollars pledged to thousands of diverse projects. With game-minded design, they’ve managed to connect entrepreneurs and artists to the support they need in a mutually beneficial environment.

<http://on.mash.to/y6vI4l>

<http://on.mash.to/x6w9G3>

<http://on.mash.to/wSMbGF>

www.kickstarter.com

KAYAK.COM AND PRICELINE

The days of travel agents are long, long, long since past, and air travelers are more or less left to their own devices when booking airfare. Not that they don’t have a little help. Sites such as Priceline and Kayak help buyers visualize and purchase their travel itineraries utilizing unique approaches to gameful design.

Kayak offers users different playful options for travel planning. Integrating Google Maps, they map out where other users have found good deals on airfare, marking dozens of international locations by price. A sidebar on the left allows the users to specify their budget, desire flight time, “stuff to do” (e.g. beach, gambling, golf, skiing), weather and more. As the options are customized the map changes, offering a less cluttered map with more concise options.

Priceline brings a more aggressive game approach to the table with its “Name Your Own Price” program. In a casino-styled approach to travel planning, a user enters their departure and destination locations, the dates and their preferred price. The name of the game here is to aim low. There is no guarantee that a deal will be found, but if an itinerary is available within the user’s price range, caveats may be offered by Priceline to entice them to haggle, such as taking a connecting flight or flying on a different day.

Engagement is the name of the game. In both cases, a user not even truly intending on making concrete travel plans may find themselves playing these games. Temporarily satiating wanderlust or vacation fantasies through game-minded engagement tactics can help to ensure that the same processes used by Kayak and Priceline will be relied upon when a traveler finally does decide to take that trip.

www.kayak.com

www.priceline.com

FOODSPOTTING

It's no longer simply enough to just eat food. It's not even enough to share with others what you've eaten. These days virtually every morsel is documented, scrutinized, and put online for a discerning and hypercritical world to see. Geolocation-based startup Foodspotting has taken this habit even further, implementing game-minded rewards and interactions through the use of mobile photo uploading and guide making.

Foodspotting users take photos of the food they eat, be it homemade or from a restaurant or store, and upload the picture through the mobile app. Simple enough, right? What these collective contributions accumulate into is a massive, virtually edible crowd-sourced map of what has and can be eaten in a certain place. Beyond simply uploading photos of what they consume, users can create location-oriented guides for others to see and follow. The

more that user contributes in "food sightings" and guides, the more points, or "tips" they accumulate. Users also gain points when other users "compliment", "wants", or "noms" items they've submitted.

Users of Foodspotting are pioneers of the virtual potluck that is fast becoming a mainstay of the internet. By creating a platform where food lovers can connect, interact, and contribute in a game-like setting, Foodspotting has brought culinary pursuits to the internet in a more engaging way than existed before, attracting partnerships with all-star chefs such as Mario Batali and Anthony Bourdain. It just goes to show that internet users aren't just hungry—they're hungry for a good experience.

<http://on.mash.to/xyq2zD>

<http://on.mash.to/xIWAmo>

www.foodspotting.com

SPOTTING AN OPPORTUNITY TO HELP FEED OTHERS: FOODSPOTTING AND HEIFER INTERNATIONAL'S PARTNERSHIP

Despite people's best intentions, it is often difficult to rouse their spirit of giving. So many people's lives are so busy that they simply find it difficult to dedicate the time and thought to charitable work. But the geolocation food guide Foodspotter and non-profit Heifer International have devised a way to interject the giving spirit into the preexisting online habits

through the use of gameful design.

The Spotathon challenge asks users to follow and complete different guides by snapping and uploading photos of certain items such as bacon, cheese curds, and asparagus. Upon the completion of a guide, Foodspotting and Heifer International donate a cow, a pig, and a vegetable garden to those in need. In return, the user gains new Foodspotting badges. A simple, gamefully designed collection ploy managed to have a huge impact on the lives of those in need, while simply asking those playing to just have a little fun and play with their food.

<http://on.mash.to/xhSvAq>

WHY WASTE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR GAMEFUL DESIGN? THE WORLD'S DEEPEST TRASH BIN

Gameful design has been all the rage over the past few years, and for good reason: it works! It engages people with a product or service in more meaningful and gratifying ways. The bulk of these tactics have lived online, implemented through web design or mobile strategies. This is not to say that the internet is the only place for game-minded design. Volkswagen's Fun Theory campaign performed the simple and perhaps unthinkable task of making throwing away rubbish fun.

Two projects were created: a trash can retrofitted with motion sensors and audio equipment to create the illusion that the several foot long receptacle was actually the depth of a well,

and a bottle recycling deposit station that could be played like a game of whack-a-mole. In the former, all a person had to do was throw away a piece of rubbish, and they would be delighted by the bizarre sound of the item falling dozens and dozens of feet, landing with a loud thud. Those using the latter would have to deposit bottles into one of six slots in the receptacles, whichever was lit up at that second, utilizing the same gameplay and timing as the carnival game where you'd have to anticipate where the mole was coming out so you could whack it.

These gamefully designed receptacles were huge hits. Despite being located in close proximity to normal receptacles, the game-minded versions were both used dozens of times more than their traditional counterparts. It can be said with a fair amount of certainty that Fun Theory proved to be correct: people are far more receptive towards a task when it is fun. Gameful design can help bring this theory to life in infinite ways.

www.thefuntheory.com

FIND THE FUTURE AT THE NYC LIBRARY

To walk through a large library without intention is to be overwhelmed. But if you've got a book to find? Well, then you've got direction, a purpose. If you've got more than a few things to locate? You're on your way to a full-blown scavenger hunt. The New York City Public Library realized the gameful potential of its stacks, and manifested it by organizing an all-night event where participants could explore the hidden rooms of the library to achieve a

final goal: to find themselves equipped to be authors in their own right come sunrise.

500 people participated in the massive scavenger hunt, locating items throughout the library such as Charles Dickens' letter opener, a draft of the Declaration of Independence, and more. The objects in question were affixed with barcodes, and a smartphone app was created to guide the participants. This is an extremely novel means to engaging people with people with the library and its contents. Applying gameful design to a physical space and its contents can create a dynamic that brings people from passive to active participants in the space around them by creating a satisfying incentive to truly seek out and absorb the world around them. In this particular case, it transformed the library from what many see as simply a building full of stuff into a place with a purpose.

<http://lat.ms/f02ZcQ>

<http://bit.ly/dR1JLY>

NERDS, LOVING EACH OTHER: WIKILOVE AND THE LOVE BUTTON

Researching and writing is hard, often thankless work. Especially in the case of Wikipedia, the free, crowd-sourced online encyclopedia. In Wikipedia, a contribution is subject to the nit-picking and arguments of thousands of disagreeing naysayers. But that is what makes it so great: an article is subject to intense and passionate public scrutiny, imposing higher standards and a more quality end result.

Wikipedia itself is well aware of the thanklessness the task, so applying ever more strategy, they have introduced WikiLove and the Love button. Wikipedia users can click the Love button in article or user profile page, and can send the person in question a photo of a kitten or a beer. That user will receive a notification that someone appreciates his or her work. This simple function introduces a reward element to an otherwise entirely gameful contribution and editing system. The satisfaction of contributing to perhaps the largest free collection of information in the world is certainly palatable. But it never hurts to let someone know that they're appreciated. WikiLove brings a more human face and interaction to this academic game.

www.wikipedia.com

<http://bit.ly/x5TMIA>

GAMING TO LOSE: WEIGHT WATCHERS' GAMIFIED APPROACH TO WEIGHT LOSS

Games such as The Sims and Second Life require huge time investments and constant diligence. Maintaining a virtual life requires that you monitor what your virtual person eats, how often they sleep, how much exercise they get and more. It might sound tedious, but these games have proved to be a massive success. Imagine if the work and effort that went into keeping up a fake person's health and well-being were applied to, you know...real life?

Weight Watchers' eTools seek to do just this. They have tackled this undertaking through

the gamification of everyday tasks and habits such as eating and exercising. Assigning points for food and workouts, Weight Watchers allows participants to monitor their habits and progress in real-time, providing graphic visualizations of their progress. A mobile smart-phone app allows them to play the game on the go. The end result is the same as any diet and exercise plan, but through gameful design and application an experience that provides a stronger understanding of the process and its benefits creates more engagement, and greater success.

<http://bit.ly/OYirs>

<http://bit.ly/xQQQYF>

4Food: CROWD-SOURCED FUN YOU CAN BITE INTO

It's conventional wisdom that fast food is uninteresting. Despite whatever flair might be added to any given product, the name of the game will still be consistency, because people just want the same thing wherever they are. Right? Maybe. But Manhattan burger joint 4food doesn't seem to care much about conventional things. They think making burgers is just a big game, almost literally.

Though customers can order conventionally from the counter, they are encouraged to order in advanced online or at one of several in-house iPads tied into their ordering system. Customers ordering through the system can customize their own burger, choosing from a smorgasbord of options. Upon completion, they can name and save their burger into the system,

where it will be there for them to choose again. Once this is done, the game can really begin.

The system encourages a customer to use social media outlets to promote their custom burger to their friends. Every time their creation is ordered, the burger inventor receives a twenty-five cent credit to 4food. The 4food website posts leaderboards with the most ordered burgers and the top burger sellers. Utilizing game design in the creation of their ever-changing menu, 4 food has managed to not only bring to life the fast food experience, but they've managed to get their customers to do their marketing for them.

<http://aol.it/coAxZ3>

<http://cnet.co/aR4lfh>

www.4food.com

NIKE+ TAG

Jogging is a pretty cut and dry way to exercise. Even when running with another person, there's not too much you can do to spice it up. Nike+, the iPhone exercise app made by the renowned sneaker maker, has taken cues from a childhood classic to bring jogging a more cohesive and competitive type of fun.

Nike+, which runners use to play music and track their distance, will prompt the user after a run if they want to play Tag. The user can then invite Nike+ friends to play, and once game play begins, either the time or distance of a run is measured, or the game is set to switch

turns whenever the person that is “it” stops running. The idea of the game is see to it that the players are almost always running, and almost always getting exercise. By bringing joggers together for an old-fashioned competitive game, Nike+ reinforces its brand while making a simple thing a little more fun.

<http://bit.ly/i8c5OF>

<http://tnw.co/yVUhbF>

TAKING WINDOW SHOPPING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Window-shopping is often a sad combination of our higher aspirations and our lowly reality. It’s fun to look, but most of time buying that desired item is just out of reach. Maybe money is tight at that moment, or perhaps you’re just the methodical type that needs to give it some thought—impulse buying can be fun, but it’s not for everyone (especially those who aren’t pushing around wheelbarrows of their own money for fun).

South Korean mobile network operator SK Telecom has created a gameful approach to window-shopping by utilizing smartphone and QR code technology. They opened a high-tech retail store in Seoul where every item’s price tag is affixed with a QR code. Shoppers can scan the code to learn more about the product in question with their smartphone. While items can be purchased in-store, the real incentive for the customer is to forward or store the scanned information, and to purchase the item online at home for savings between ten and

forty percent. The more rational road is rewarded in this game-minded experience, making window-shopping a new and more engaging experience.

<http://bit.ly/poc8oG>

www.sktelecom.com

GAMIFYING THE INSTRUCTION MANUAL

We all know better than to just willy-nilly start trying to use something without even knowing how it works. Or do we? The human race in general seems to have a massive aversion to reading the instructions? And why shouldn’t we? You couldn’t find a less appealing way to digest information if you tried. But Google (of course) has put together a gamefully designed mobile website to walk people through their Google Search app.

The site is artfully put together from animation involving high-tech 3d printers. Users side scroll through a town peppered with brightly coloured buildings. Clicking a coloured building will open a video guide, highlighting different features of the app. As the user moves through the town, mini games are unlocked, providing quick and fun breaks. The entire experience is extremely engaging, and by the time it’s completed, a user has a full and comprehensive understanding of how to use the Google Search app. Google has proven that a little entertaining ingenuity, coupled with an eye for gameful design, can create a fantastic experience out of something otherwise entirely droll.

www.uncoveryourworld.com

MAKING YOU WORK FOR IT: CALVIN KLEIN AND QR CODES

Boring and passive, blasé and passé: this is the reality of the billboard. They are rarely intriguing, and even more infrequently eye-catching. So what is the typical remedy to this problem? Put a buxomy lady on it—the fewer clothes the better. If it sounds a little predictable, that's because it is. But even when you give the people what they want, will they even remember what that bosomy woman was trying to get you to buy or do? Probably not.

Calvin Klein decided to make undersexed billboard viewer really work for it. The game-minded interaction of QR codes decidedly did the trick. Instead of giving away for free the gigantic photo of the lady, giving no real connection to the brand, a gigantic QR code was put up with the headline “Get It Uncensored”. Now that’s advertising. The smartphone that reads the code is rewarded with a racy forty-second advertisement. The beauty of interjecting game design—forcing the user to participate in an action-to-reward process—is that it the user will actually remember what the ad is for, and what brand delivered the goods with busty reward.

<http://on.mash.to/wet2ji>

GETGLUE GAMEFULLY KEEPS YOU GLUED TO THE TUBE

Location-based services like Foursquare and Gowalla have cornered the market on checking

in when you’re out and about. But what about when you stay at home? No one wants to advertise the fact they’re staying in by pinpointing their location on a lonely, lonely map. But for the television and film aficionado, advertising what you’re doing at home might seem like a natural thing to do.

GetGlue came up with a more appropriate way to gamify staying in in similar way to how Foursquare gamified going out. Much like Foursquare, users are awarded with badges, can find recommendations and reviews, and can connect with like-minded people also using the service. But instead of checking in to places, they check in to media. Watching Harry Potter? Check in to get a badge for it! With a gameful approach to watching movies, you don’t have to simply view passively—you can make movies something participatory.

<http://bit.ly/xmMmJ6>

www.getglue.com

Dr Jason Fox

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