

Leaderboards are an effective way to show a user quickly where they currently stand within a gamified system. A fun example is the Gamification Gurus leaderboard from the company [Leaderboarded](#). Each month they release an update that shows who has been active in the gamification world that month. It is a great example of a leaderboard being used in isolation - without all of the points and badges that are often associated with simple gamification.



Many blogs and websites these days make use of a comment system called Disqus to manage their comments. It has a few plug-ins that you can easily add to your site if you are using it for comments. One is a Top Commenter's box. If you look at my blog, you should see it in the side bar. It shows people, at a glance, who is posting the most comments on your pages.

From a user standpoint, it puts their activity front and centre on the site, which will hopefully motivate them (with a little bit of peer pressure) to comment more to move up the leaderboard. It also shows you their activity on other Disqus forums, which is another reason for them to leave comments with you. The more people who see the comments they are making on other sites, the more chance there is they can spread their own influence.

Absolute and Relative Leaderboards

There are several ways to implement leaderboards, but I want to concentrate on just two that I will refer to as absolute and relative leaderboards.

An **absolute leaderboard** will display the top X number of people on the leaderboard. This has pros and cons. It is great for the people who are visible on the Leaderboard, it can give them a feeling of achievement and status. It is also useful for others who may want to see who is best at a certain activity. It is a safe bet that if they are at the top of the leaderboard, they are at least worth considering! However, it can be very de-motivational for those at the bottom or even not on the leaderboard at all. If you are in 100th place, the top spot can look like a totally unachievable goal! For some, this may be a great challenge, but others will

disengage almost totally.

Relative leaderboards try to solve this issue by showing a users position relative to others of a similar rank. So, whilst you may be 900th out of 1000, you only see the 10 people above and below you on the leaderboard. This means that you don't get the issue of feeling inadequate or that there is no hope of ever reaching the top - you are less aware of how far down the list you are! Again, there are downsides to this. One is actually technical. To show a users relative position, you have to know who they are - so they have to be logged in to a system. The other issue is that it could be seen as meaningless just knowing who is doing the same as you. As I said, some people like to see the challenge ahead of them.

Of course the solution may be (as with Leaderboarded) to have the option to see either view!

As well as displaying status, leaderboards can serve other purposes. If the leaderboard is set up to show you in relation to colleagues or friends, you may find that social peer pressure comes in - one-up-manship. It is amazing how many people in a peer group will want to hit the top spot of a simple leaderboard. They can be great forms of rapid feedback for users. Rising up the leaderboard as you succeed at tasks is a very visible sign that you are doing something right. Also, it can be a great social connection tool. As I said, if people are near the top of a leaderboard it is a safe bet they are worth talking too!

Whilst this is only a small subset of the tools available to us in gamification, it is a good place to start and there are even some premade reward systems, such as Punchtab, which you can apply to sites and blogs.

As an aside I have just released a new version of my eBook [Gamification: A Simple Introduction & a Bit More](#). If you already have a copy, you should get an email soon from Amazon telling you there has been an update. There are 7 new chapters - mostly made up of content from the blog, but some new bits as well. Thanks ☐

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