We have all heard the saying “Content is King”. Marketers tell us this, SEO experts, PR people, writers and more. They promote quality over quantity as the way to attract and keep people. They also promote the long game, looking for repeatable and sustained success rather than a quick and temporary fix.

In social media it is your content that gets you good quality connections, not silly schemes to buy them. When writing blogs, it is the quality of your content that keeps readers coming back for more, not your publicity offensive.

That is not to say that quality will guarantee success, it won’t. You still need to promote, you still need to get people to see what great content you have. The point is, that you want them to stay and enjoy more. So you push your content through social media channels, you take out advertising in the local or national press, you have adverts on TV. You do all of this to get people to discover you, then you use your great content to keep them and get them to tell their friends and family all about how great your content is.

This is just as true for gamification.

There is a temptation to see gamification as that quick fix, a way to get people into your system, to get bums on seats. You throw badges and achievements and loyalty schemes at it and hope for the best. Just as with buying followers on twitter, or paying people to create content that you then pass off as your own in a blog, this may well get bums on seats. However, in isolation, that won’t keep those people there and it won’t get them coming back once they figure out what a shallow experience it really is.

You still need quality content. Gamification is not a sticking plaster that will fix a broken and badly written system. It will not replace quality content, or well designed interactions. If you are a teacher who is gamifying 20 year old notes, you won’t be improving your students experience. If you are a company trying to make the expenses system more bearable by adding points and prizes - it won’t work for long. When the shine of the badges begins to fade, there has to be more to keep the people.

I heard a great analogy from my friend Roman Rackwitz, about gamification. He said that the way he explains it to people is that “Soccer is the gamification of running”. This is brilliant in its simplicity as well as its accuracy. Get kids to run around with for no reason
other than running and they will bore quickly. Throw a ball into the mix and they will start to play. This is your on boarding phase, the attract mode, the first few badges and the shiny stuff in your gamified system.

However, if that is all you do, they will still get bored. You need rules for them to follow (which they will most likely make up for themselves given time). These rules take them from pure play into a game - and that is where the quality content comes in. It is this that keeps people all over the world playing soccer. The rules give you a well designed and balanced game that is easy to play but hard to master. From here, the trophies and the medals and the points are all hard earned and meaningful to the players, they represent the achievements of people who have worked hard to become good.

Quality content is king and always will be, even in gamification.

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