

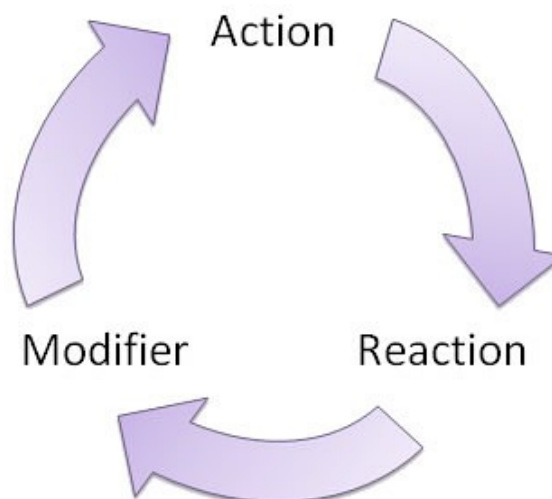
## Feedback Loops, Gamification and Employee Motivation

### Description

To anyone involved in game design, feedback loops will be a well known concept. To those in gamification, they are often talked about, but not everyone will know what they actually are and how they can be used.

Feedback loops come in two main flavors; **positive** feedback loops and **negative** feedback loops. Which ever you are looking at they are constructed in a similar way, with two or more phases.

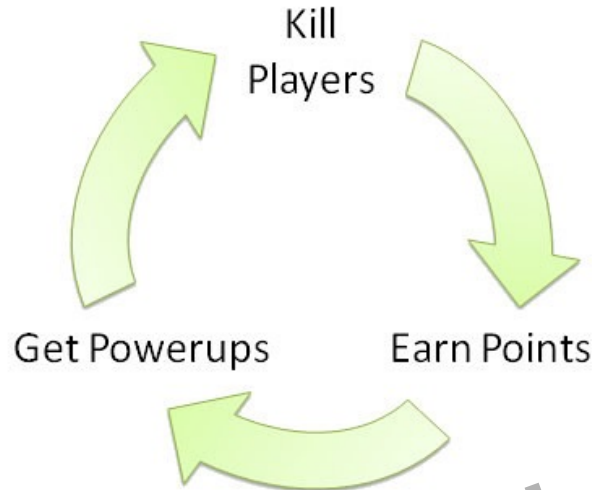
- User performs an action
- Something happens
- User experience is modified
- Repeat



*Basic Feedback Loop, will have 2 or more steps*

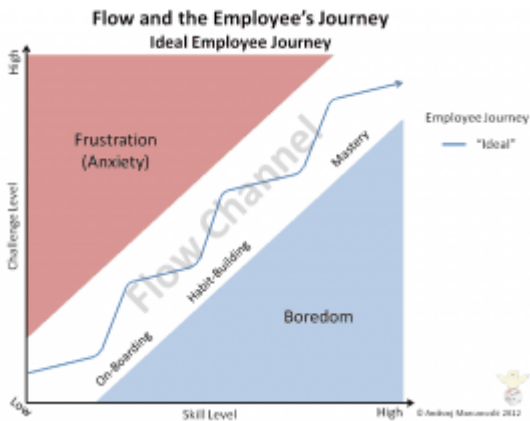
A positive feedback loop amplifies something, whereas a negative feedback loop will reduce something.

Let's take make up a game. It is a multiplayer shooting game and it employs powerups and health packs (old school here). Consistent kills gives the player certain experience points that lead to ability boosts (like speed or strength). These boosts lead to the player being able to get more kills, leading to more points and yet more boosts.



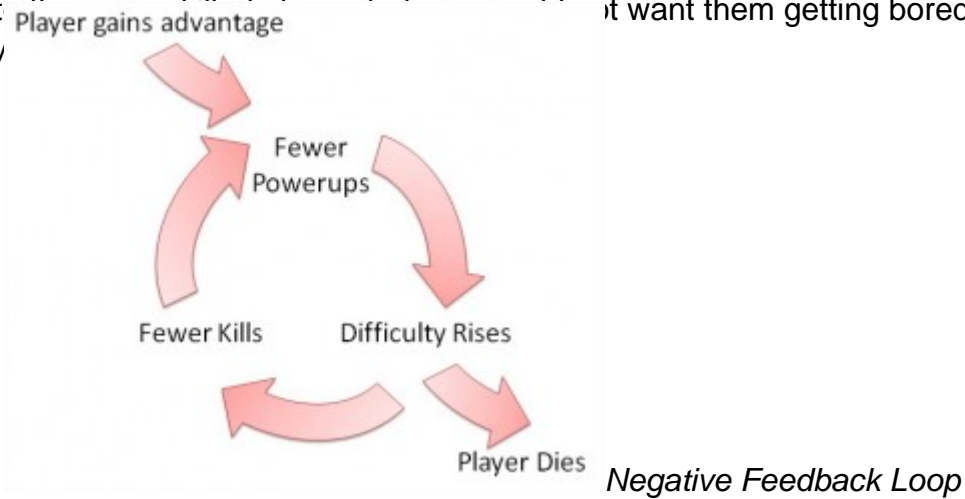
*Standard Positive Feedback Loop*

Now, if this was the only feedback loop in play, it could get unbalanced very fast. The most skilled players get reward upon reward, whilst the less skilled players get trodden on more and more. If this continued to happen unchecked, the less skilled players would never come back. If you consider our [flow and player journey](#) charts for ages ago, the player would be pushed continually into the frustration area as the challenge increased far faster than their skill increased.



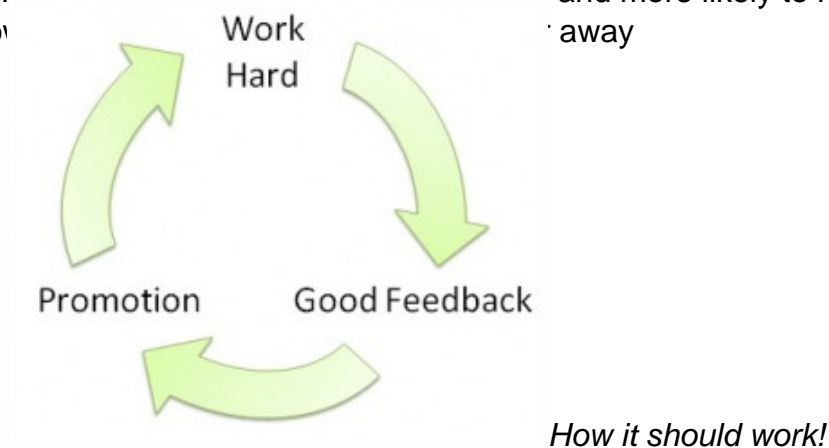
*Flow and Employee Journey*

So, we have negative feedback loops as well. Whilst the player may be getting stronger and stronger, what if as their boosts multiply, their ability to find health packs or more powerful weapons was reduced, leaving more pickups for the less skilled players – giving them a slightly better chance of winning. This kind of balancing effect would help to keep them engaged with the game, rather than just quitting! It may seem unfair to some, but it's what you want them getting bored either! (Back to the flow diagram y

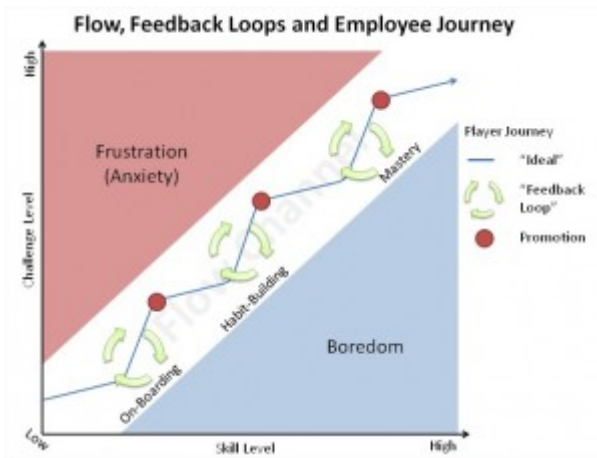


This may not seem like it has much relevance to gamification and negative feedback loops are rarely seen, but if we think about feedback in general – we can see that these positive loops are present almost everywhere. In your career there is a very common one. Do a good job, get good feedback, get promoted and repeat. Now, the difference here is that this can take years to happen – far too long for most millennials (or most others if we are honest).

With gamification we can look at shorter goals, where these positive feedback loops can repeat faster. If your grading system goes F,E,D,C,B,A why not have a few sub stages. Maybe it could go F.1, F.2, F.3, E.1, E.2, E.3 etc. That way, the feedback cycle is shorter and more likely to help keep the motivation going – know



Just for fun, we can add that to our previous flow diagram. The feedback loop continues until you hit the promotion sweetspot and move up a level.



*Employee Journey, with Feedback loops and promotion chances*

With that in mind, an analogy!

Take a Slot machine in a casino. Put money in, pull the lever, stand a chance of getting money out. Ignoring the random nature of the payout for a moment, most people are of the opinion that the more money there is in a slot machine, the more chance there is that it will pay out. So, here you have your positive feedback loop.

However, there is a random element here as well, the win comes at a seemingly random time. Whilst you know that your chances of winning are increasing, you don't know when that win will happen. In gambling, this is often where the addiction lies – that element of chance, with the knowledge you have to win eventually!



*Slot Machine Feedback Loop with (Win and Loss states)*

In work, we normally have a similar random element to our feedback loop. Do a good job, get praise, get promoted – **at some point**. We rarely have this mapped as a definite point in our career. Waiting

for the seemingly random event of a promotion (or any other career forwarding event) can cause massive frustration and will cause people to leave. Think of the whole “Glass ceiling” issue many complain of. Unlike in gambling, where you go in knowing there is an element of chance involved, in your career most would rather have some control over the outcome of their hard work. I doubt many will get addicted to the random nature of promotions!



*How most promotion feedback loops work  
(with win and loss states!)*

Using feedback loops and [shorter defined goals and checkpoints](#), we can help keep people far more engaged than just expecting them to repeat an action over and over again with no feedback or visible chance of a “win” at all.

### Category

1. Gamification
2. Opinion
3. Rants

### Tags

1. feedback
2. Gamification
3. Glass ceiling
4. Journey (band)
5. Negative feedback
6. Positive feedback
7. Slot machine
8. Win-loss record (pitching)

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