

As many of you know, I recently took exception to a particular definition of gamification that was doing the rounds. However, the positive effect was to make me think about what it really means and also started to make me wonder what other people think of it. So, I asked them - I did a little research...

The results were interesting. I gathered 30 different definitions, some from industry experts and others from people with an interest. They are all listed at the end, but I thought I would share a few thoughts from them.

The first thing that caught my eye was there are two distinct streams of thinking. The first is the idea of adding gaming elements or ideas to things that are not games. The other is to make things that are not games more like games. Similar, but slightly different concepts.

I love that so many made mention of "people" or "users / players", showing that we agree that gamification is a people centric way of designing engaging experiences. Fun came up quite a lot as well!

Here is a quick breakdown of the most common concepts that came up. I have normalised the wording (so mentions of users became people, objectives became goals etc.)

Basic Concepts

| Word / Concept | Percentage of Definitions |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Engage | 38% |
| People | 28% |
| Fun | 25% |
| Motivate | 22% |
| Play | 16% |
| Solving problems | 16% |
| Behaviour | 16% |
| Goals | 16% |

I have a more detailed breakdown after the definitions.

The average definition

Anyway, I thought I would create a simple definition that encapsulates this. I went through

many iterations and discussed with other experts and friends and came up with this.

Gamification: Creating more game-like experiences in non game contexts

This is very simple and does not include anything about *why* or *how*, just what it is.

I could have gone for “*The user focused application of game elements, game mechanics, game design or [game thinking](#) in non game contexts to engage, motivate, change behaviour, solve problems, make goals more achievable, make tasks more playful or add fun*” but that does not seem to roll off the tongue as well.

The point is, we are all looking at this in pretty much the same way. **We are all trying to make more engaging experiences for people using ideas that games have been using forever.** We may all define it a little differently, but that is just semantics. Platforms and techniques may differ, but the goal is the same.

Anyway, here are the definitions and the names of the contributors. Thank you to everyone who contributed!

The Definitions

Reverse-engineering what makes games successful and grab it into business environment

Roman Rackwitz

The use of strategic elements of game thinking, game-design and game mechanics for use on non-game environments such as business, education, healthcare, not-for-profit and government applications.

Marigo Raftopoulos

Making a non-game experience worthy of a human being's sustained

engagement, usage and loyalty by making it more compelling (more social, competitive, collaborative, mastery building, goal seeking — but not necessarily more fun) through the skillful integration of game thinking directly into that core experience.

Barry Kirk

The use of game mechanics and experience design to digitally engage and motivate people to achieve their goals

Brian Burke

The use of game attributes to drive game-like player behavior in a non-game context with predictability. Where game attributes may be anything that a game-designer use to make a game fun and engaging. For example: game mechanics, game dynamics, game-design principles, gaming psychology, [player journey](#), narratives, incentives, etc.

Michael Wu

Gamification is an empathy-based process of enhancing a service with affordances for gameful experiences to teach, engage, entertain, measure to support players' overall value creation to indirectly support entities' overall value creation

Mario Herger

Gamification is the craft of deriving all the fun and addicting elements found in games and applying them to real-world or productive activities - human focused design

Yu_kai Chou

Gamification is the use of game-design elements in non-game contexts

Sebastian Deterding

Gamification is the process of using game thinking and game dynamics to engage audiences and solve problems

Gabe Zichermann

Gamification is using game-based mechanics, aesthetics and game thinking to engage people, motivate action, promote learning, and solve problems.

Karl Kapp

it is the use of game-design and game psychology in non-game settings to engage the target audience and motivate specific behaviors.

Keith Ng

The use of game mechanics to increase engagement and use of websites and applications.

Erika Webb

Gamification is the use of game design thinking in non-game environments to

engage people.

Sergio Jimenez

Gamification is the process of designing fun user experiences in non-game context by means of game mechanics and experience design

José Carlos Cortizo

Gamification is the use of game design elements in non-game contexts to increase people's [motivation](#) towards a well-intended objective

Victor Manrique

the use of game elements and design metaphors to solve problems

Andrzej Marczewski

The use of game elements and game-design techniques in non-game contexts

Kevin Werbach

the use of game mechanics, dynamics, and frameworks to promote desired behaviors

Lee and Hammer

gamification takes the characteristics we like about games and adds them to everyday actions in order to make them more interesting

TechnologyAdvice

a fun way to do things that have to be done

Opusphere

Gamification is the use of the elements that make games fun in non-gaming environments to create motivating experiences that help solve concrete problems

Wonnova

Using game elements to engage & influence people at a level that motivates them to give you a desired outcome.

Laura Marczewski

Gamification is reframing goals to be appealing and achievable using game-design principles

Nat A Lee

Gamification is the application of game elements and design principles to solve problems in non-game contexts

Frederik Agge Ronex

The design of game elements and game dynamics to engage play in non-game arenas

Dutch Driver

Gamification is taking fun and habit-forming elements found in games and applying them to productive activities

Michael Finney

gamification: the use of game concepts in a non-game environment to solve problems and also to make the experience funnier

Adrien Rubstein

The use of game elements to increase engagement and make life and work more fun

Mark Schreiber

the application of game concepts to a traditional idea or setting

Hunter Fortuin

Gamification is the application of gameful or playful layers to motivate engagement with a specific context

Scott Nicholson

Applying game mechanics to processes not normally thought of as games

Jeff Jockisch

Break down of common words

| Word | Frequency |
|------------------|------------------|
| game | 16 |
| engage | 12 |
| non game context | 12 |
| user | 9 |
| fun | 7 |
| game mechanics | 7 |
| game design | 6 |
| motivation | 6 |
| game elements | 6 |
| design | 5 |
| experience | 5 |
| problems | 4 |
| goals | 4 |
| behaviour | 4 |
| dynamics | 4 |
| solve | 4 |
| principles | 3 |
| psychology | 3 |
| game thinking | 3 |

Defining gamification - what do people really think?



Please wait...