

A few days ago on the awesome Facebook group [Gamification Hub](#) - I posed the following question.



[Andrzej Marczewski](#)

If the word gamification was banned from all usage - what would you replace it with. I'd go with "[game thinking](#)" personally.

What followed was a fantastic conversation that I felt deserved to be shared. This is just a small example of the great content this group generates.



[Roman Rackwitz](#)

In this case, I would try to get rid off everything that sounds like game (because it will still confuse everyone).

My two cents: Engagement-Design or Human-Driven-Design



[Keith Ng](#)

Rewards and [Motivation](#) Design



[Andrzej Marczewski](#)

Both good. I am waiting for human centric design or ludification / ludic design as well!



[Marigo Raftopoulos](#)

Gamification is and does so many different things, so it's kinda hard to choose one name. But if you really twisted my arm, I'd go for experience design.

[Manuel Pimenta](#)

My only question is that human-centric design or human driven design are already out there: it's called Design Thinking. I don't think we should hide from games because it's precisely what makes gamification so special and not just another lame stab at design. We've already got pervasive design, persuasive design, human centric, experience design and so on... game thinking or playful design are interesting, but I'd probably go with game based design. It sends the message across and sort of implies that it's not game design, it's just game based...

[Frederik Agge Ronex](#)

Experience Design.

[Victor Manrique](#)

Game Thinking +1

[Joris Beerda](#)

I see that human focused design is not mentioned. Human centric design exists already. Experience design is good but could be confused with UX design. User Focused Design?

[Marigo Raftopoulos](#)

I'm jumping & hoping to start a conversation, I'm curious...Manuel Pimenta with the list of names you've just mentioned, where do you think 'gamification' is different and how does it add value?

[Roman Rackwitz](#)

I used to say human focused design also but than I experienced that customers thought about it more as a passive activity. This is why I changed to human driven design. It puts the human in an active position within the design. Means: the gamified activity changed all the time depending on the performance of the user. Driven by the human

What if we could never use the word Gamification again...?



[Dutch Driver](#)

Motivation Engineering



[Dutch Driver](#)

Or Engagement Engineering. ME is aka Mechanical Engineer and EE is aka Electrical Engineer



[Mayur Kapur](#)

Game-Like Human Focused Design!!



[Mayur Kapur](#)

If that looks like too long...GHFD



[Dutch Driver](#)

ha It is on my business card



[Roman Rackwitz](#) Inofficially I call it Enjoyneering. For the germans: from Engineering to Enjoyneering



[Davis Webb](#)

simulations and advanced explorative -participative environments



[Gabe Zichermann](#)

This is a scenario only Europeans and Chinese people would role play.



[Andrzej Marczewski](#)

Hah [Gabe](#)



[Dutch Driver](#)

What about ex-pat NYCers in love with Oaxaca, [Gabe](#).



[Gabe Zichermann](#)

The “what if we banned a word” scenario isn’t hugely important in any of the North American countries. It’s not really our thing.



[Andrzej Marczewski](#) its all good! Just trying to get at the core of certain issues some seem to be having



[Keith Ng](#)

I am all for simple and clear definitions. Words like human centric design and experience design are nice, but way too generic and vague. I use rewards and motivation design to educate my clients, and they feedback that it’s much clearer and sells the benefits directly.



[Keith Ng](#)

[Gabe Zichermann](#) not a fan of role playing either- it’s tough to educate Asia on gamification and it helps sometimes if there is an analogous definition.



[Gabe Zichermann](#)

LOL you guys. I’m just stalling until someone says Gabeification. JK. I like lots of the ideas mooted above. My personal thing is to vary the synonym based on the context.

So, for example, if we’re doing a project that is employee engagement, I might call it that: an employee engagement program based on game principles. Or such. Without gamification as an omnibus term, we just end up having to be super specific is all.



[Dutch Driver](#) [Keith](#)

same in Alabama and Huntsville is a Federal Gov't town...not generally known as even early majority adopters of innovation or technology.



[Dutch Driver](#)

In some senses, Gabification ought to be the name of a conference hall in the Gamification Hall of Fame, [Gabe](#). Fitting tribute.



[Keith Ng](#)

Agree with [Gabe Zichermann](#) that gamification still ought to be the main keyword. Evangelizing just needs baby steps to start with, just like changing habits through gamification. And Gabification is not a bad idea. Maybe a good April fools



[Andrzej Marczewski](#)

I was being called daveification for a while lol



[Mario Herger](#)

Every name different from gamification, misses out on some of the most important differences, namely that Gamification include the focus on the player's interests and motivations, and that fun is an important element. Experience, Engagement, Behavior Design do not cover that. Design Thinking is not looking at the motivations and interests and the fun of a player either; And they all don't have metrics in focus. Gamification inherently is data driven, and has that too.

None of the "alternative" terms describe that and communicate those qualities so quickly.

Also just because executives get squeamish because there is the word game in there, is a lame reason. The very same executives find it totally normal to use even more stupid words like "cloud" (is my data disappearing like fog?), mobile (does my stuff go away? Isn't a car a mobile thing?) and so on...



[Manuel Pimenta](#)

Don't know if I can agree with you on that [Mario](#): Design Thinking does have the motivations and interests of the user in mind, and of course it has a focus on metrics, or else it would be useless as an approach in an enterprise context. On the other hand, I think that the focus on "fun" and the implied decision to treat users like players (and calling them as such!) is what brings gamification's chops into play (no pun intended :D).

[Marigo](#) I think that this is precisely the big difference with gamification versus all the other approaches: not the way it targets users or utilizes motivation and engagement engineering, because, let's face it - nowadays there is a whole movement based on making the experience special for the users. Don't know if you've heard of it, it's called Apple.

Gamification for me is what brings FUN into the spotlight. Gamification uses FUN as its main driver. Players need to truly enjoy the experience, to enter that window of [FLOW](#) that few other media apart from games can create on such a diverse and instantaneous scale. So yeah, I wouldn't change the word, even if I have to begin every meeting with "this is not about making games", but if I had to, I would certainly not shy away from using "game" as a buzzword.

That being said, I also believe that there's something to what [Gabe](#) was talking about regarding tailoring your message for the context it's being delivered in. Like Maarten Molenaar I believe once said, the application of "subtle" gamification, as in, it's there even though you don't mention it explicitly, and when your client finds out he's already hooked on it



[Mario Herger](#)

I have done Design Thinking a lot and also served as a DT coach in enterprises. We never talk about metrics. And also: we don't look at motivations and interests. We look at how we can help the user to accomplish the task easier and with less errors. But never ask the question, if they actually want to do that out of their own motivation and interest. Observing them at a ticket vending machine does not ask why and what's their motivation, but how they can be helped to make it frictionless. A toothbrush for children (IDEO designed the one with the thick handle) did not have the question, if the child is motivated or interested in that, or to make it more fun, but more how can we help the child brush the teeth easier.

That is a very different approach. Gamification comes in and asks exactly that. So yes, DT and Gamification ARE different. Now, we use DT as a basis for Gamification Design Thinking, but we added those missing components to the design process.



Manuel Pimenta

I'm not denying your mad skills on DT here [Mario](#), but apparently we've had different teachers the way we've been doing DT in my company focuses entirely on the users motivations and interests, we are thought to dig deeper as much as required in order to get to the real issues. We are also instructed to focus on metrics in order to identify if the objectives are being met. What you're describing to me is "just" experience design - card sorting, some interviews to understand UI difficulties, and so forth. And it's that precisely definition of Design Thinking that made me state that what differentiates Gamification is not its focus on users but the methods that are used to resolve the issues derived from that focus.

On the other hand, we do agree on the fact that DT and Gamification are very different indeed, but for me the difference is in the enjoyment factor, the player nomenclature, the emphasis on achieving that state of FLOW, that hidden business objective inherent to every gamification project: let's make it fun.



Manuel Pimenta

(btw, loving this discussion! :D)

[Hasan Hasanov](#)

I love Enjoyneering, it has interconnected with the behavior and game aspects with joy slogan and includes designing and invention formulas with engineering word.

[Marigo Raftopoulos](#)

When we compare and contrast gamification to these other design methods it becomes apparent that we don't yet have the agreed broad parameters of a design model and framework (e.g like DT) of our own. And maybe we may never achieve that, given the number of mostly small and independent practitioners. For example, game design itself has the same issues and it's had them for decades. For DT, IDEO was big enough to test and validate the process, educate and resource the market, and promote it for everyone to use. We try to differentiate gamification by saying it includes fun, flow, motivation, engagement, user focus etc. but these concepts are abstract at best, and there is no way we can claim

ownership of them as being unique to gamification, as other design methods are also evolving (and are better organized). I love it how this community of practitioners is connected and supportive of one another, so I'm interested in how you'd like to see the industry evolve and grow.

[Tore Rex](#)

We often explain it as “the use of strategic game mechanics” or “sustainable motivation for digital platforms” or sometimes just “game-based”... Now when I think about it, it depends on who we talk to and if it's spoken or in text.

In Denmark and when it's education, people tend to use “game-based” for some reason.

More business oriented customers tends to go with “motivational user experiences” or “strategic game-mechanics.”

The programmers go for “game-mechanics” or just “a level bar” or whatever game mechanic is used, hehe.

[Manuel Pimenta](#)

[Marigo](#) I understand where you're coming from, but I don't quite agree with your opinion regarding the level of abstractness in fun, flow or motivation. In fact, the work by people like [Nicole Lazzaro](#) or Michael Wu or even Prof. Mihaly goes precisely in the direction of legitimizing those concepts as measurable consequences of good gamification design. Furthermore, although we can't claim ownership of these concepts, we can and should do so to the whole collection as sub-parts of a bigger concept called gamification. The fact that players have so big an input as to warrant all of these perspectives on the designs we create for them is in itself a justification as to why gamification is special. And I sure would like to know what more of you think on this

[Marigo Raftopoulos](#)

Don't get me wrong Manuel Pimenta, I'm a great advocate of gamification. My business and my PhD research is built on it. I think we need to move on from popular opinion to a more scientific basis to grow and move forward as an industry. The people and their good work that you mention above are great examples of how we as gamification practitioners are not



seeing our own confirmation biases. We can't take work that has been done in a different context and retrofit it to gamification. It can certainly help inform, but it is not the basis from which rigorous models or methods are built. Why do you think that gamification has an alleged 80% failure rate? To me it points to some of our basic assumptions being not quite right.



Manuel Pimenta

hehe wasn't implying you weren't in the gamification wagon [Marigo](#) the thing is that work by Michael Wu and Nicole Lazzaro was done in the context of gamification, that's why I state them as references on the "scientification" of gamification. We certainly need more folk like them and like you that dedicate their studies to the details of our practice.

About the famed 80%, the problem is not that our basic assumptions are not right, but instead that there are a lot of people trying to make an easy stab at gamification without understanding its finer concepts. And this is not just our problem, if you look at the management or psychological sections in a bookstore, the amount of utter nonsense that is being written off as "silver bullets" or "genius theory" is ridiculous. And it'll go up before it goes down.

The "easy fix" sharks sniffed blood in the water with our gamification baby and lots of them made and are still making a mess of it.

Enter people like all of you guys: [Andrzej](#), [Yu-kai](#), [Mario](#), [Roman](#), [Gabe](#), etc etc etc discussing all of these questions with annoying newbies like me so we can all get our answers straight



[Joris Beerda](#)

Great, so we are back to using Gamification as the term for what we do and explain it to different clients in different settings differently Nothing wrong with that, all denominators for movements have been discussed at lengths by its practitioners (whether it was "capitalism", "feminism" or any other new term). And agreement over the applicability or usability often took decades to be established. In 5 years from now we won't be having these discussions anymore I think. We'd be too busy implementing all our Gamification projects anyway

[Davis Webb](#)

gamification and game-based learning bleed into each other and it gets confusing, I tend to be more pedantic in my explanations to clients, the word “game” is still burdensome, and is associated with frivolity and mirth, and god forbid we should experience mirth in a classroom!

[Joris Beerda](#)

Well, if 70% of big corporates have implemented Gamification by now (whether in a good way or not), it cannot be THAT confusing I think.

[Nat A Lee](#)

In an educational context I have started using the phrase ‘Leveling Up’ as it creates an image of the Learners’ Journey and their different needs at each point. It is still linked to games, but takes the conversation towards structural gamification.

[Toby Beresford](#)

On my swim this morning, I found myself wondering about this conversation, as you do. I was wondering if we could visualise it like a tree - with gamification as the trunk, behavioural economics/game design/motivational design/ scorekeeping etc as the roots, the branches are then then disciplines: Gamified Customer Relationship Management (GCRM), Gamified Performance Management (GPM), Gamified Learning Management (GLM), Gamified Loyalty (G-loyalty) and so on? GSummit does this pretty well. I think acronyms can be helpful in clarifying what we mean, by compounding concepts and so offering a mental bridge between the old and new.

[Andrzej Marczewski](#)

What if we could never use the word Gamification again...?



Please wait...