In the last chapter, we looked at goals and feedback. To follow on from this, I wanted to look at how you should plan feedback and rewards, based on the user's expectations. However, to start, we need to look at the User Journey, which is a chapter on its own!

What is a User Journey?

In our world, the user journey is the series of steps that a user takes whilst engaged with your solutions. I break it down into four key stages. Discovery, OnBoarding, Immersion and Mastery/Replay. Ok, so that is more like 4 1/2 steps…

Discover
There has to be a discovery phase, like the attract screen in the arcades, because without it – how will people start to use the system? It may just be an email to tell you to do some mandatory training, it may be subtle posters that hint at something new. However you decide to do it, it is essential and has to fit with the overall theme of the programme.

On-Board
Nothing new here, this is the scaffolding of the whole show. If you get this wrong, people will not get any further in their journey! It has the potential to be a massive drop off phase of the journey. You have to balance it just right, to hold the user's hand enough to keep them going, but not so much they feel babied and foolish. Measured use of rewards can be of great benefit in this stage as digital "pats on the back".

Immerse
Once they are in the system and know what they are doing, they can immerse themselves in the activities – be it learning, day to day sales entry or any other activity. This is where good activity and feedback loops are essential to keep people engaged. It is also the stage of the journey where you will need to stop relying on rewards and start helping the users find their intrinsic reason to be there.

Master
This is the phase where a couple of things may happen. This may be the point where the journey ends, the user has finished and has met the end-game requirements, game over man… However, it may also be the start of the next phase of the journey, a bit like the Black belt in martial arts. You have mastered the first journey, now you must move on to the second and third etc. *Achievers* aim for this level and will work hard to get it. Make sure they feel rewarded for their efforts (and I don't mean points and badges!!!)

Replay

If there is no specific moment where the journey ends, you need to include replayability. This can come in several forms. It could be an opportunity for the ones who have completed, to try and ace it. Think about casual games where you can finish a level with 1, 2 or 3 stars. The replay value comes from trying to get through levels you didn't score 3 on again, trying to attain the maximum. It may be that they get to play again at a high difficulty – remember the Nightmare mode from Doom? It may be that they can play again with a different role. In the case of a learning-related system, they could go back with the role of master, rather than apprentice, acting as a guide and mentor to those who are yet to master the earlier phases. You can really leverage the *Philanthropist* User Types here.

Gamification User Journey

Rewarding the Journey

As I said at the start, I will cover this in detail in Part 7, however, it is worth touching on it here.

The key is to balance the types and intensity of the rewards based on the perceived value of the actions and the perceived effort needed from the end user.

At the start of their journey, they may need more rewards and feedback to help them keep moving, to reassure them that they are on the right track. Once they have started to immerse themselves in the solution, the frequency of rewards can start to reduce as they move towards mastery.
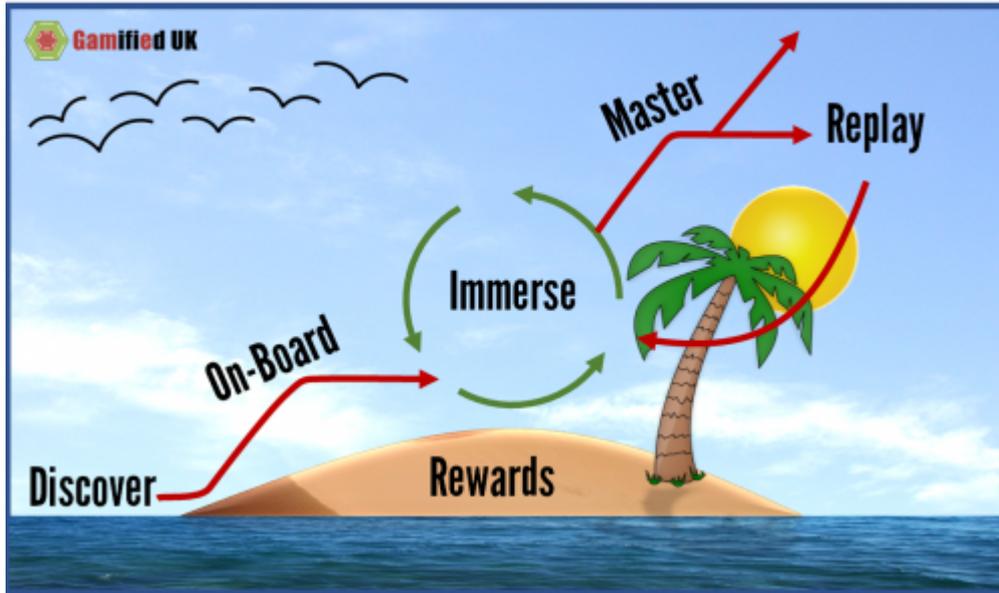
When there is a larger than average challenge (a Boss Battle if you will) then the level of reward may need to be increased as the effort for the end user has increased.

Eventually, you want to be in a position where the user is using the solution without the need for rewards, but feedback will still be essential if it is applied appropriately (I.E. when it is needed).

Key Learning Points

1. The user journey can be split into Discovery, OnBoarding, Immersion and Mastery/Replay
2. Rewards need to be used appropriately to support that journey over time
3. I like pretty pictures....

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