

Expanding the BEM Framework (Behaviour, Motivation, Emotions, Mechanics)

Description

Designing Gamified Systems with Emotional Depth

Gamification is far more than sprinkling points and leaderboards over a system and hoping for the best. Real success lies in crafting meaningful experiences that connect with users on a deeper level. That's where the **BEM Framework—Behaviour, Motivation, Emotion, and Mechanics**—comes into play. It provides a robust foundation for designing systems that not only engage and entertain but also inspire and resonate.

This guide explores the framework in its entirety and delves deeply into how each element integrates with the others. By connecting Behaviour, Motivation, Emotion, and Mechanics, you'll create systems that truly matter.

Building Engagement Step by Step

1. Behaviour: The Foundation of Action

Every great system begins with an understanding of behaviour. What are your users doing now? What do you want them to do? And, crucially, what is standing in their way? Behaviour is the foundation for creating experiences that guide users towards meaningful action.

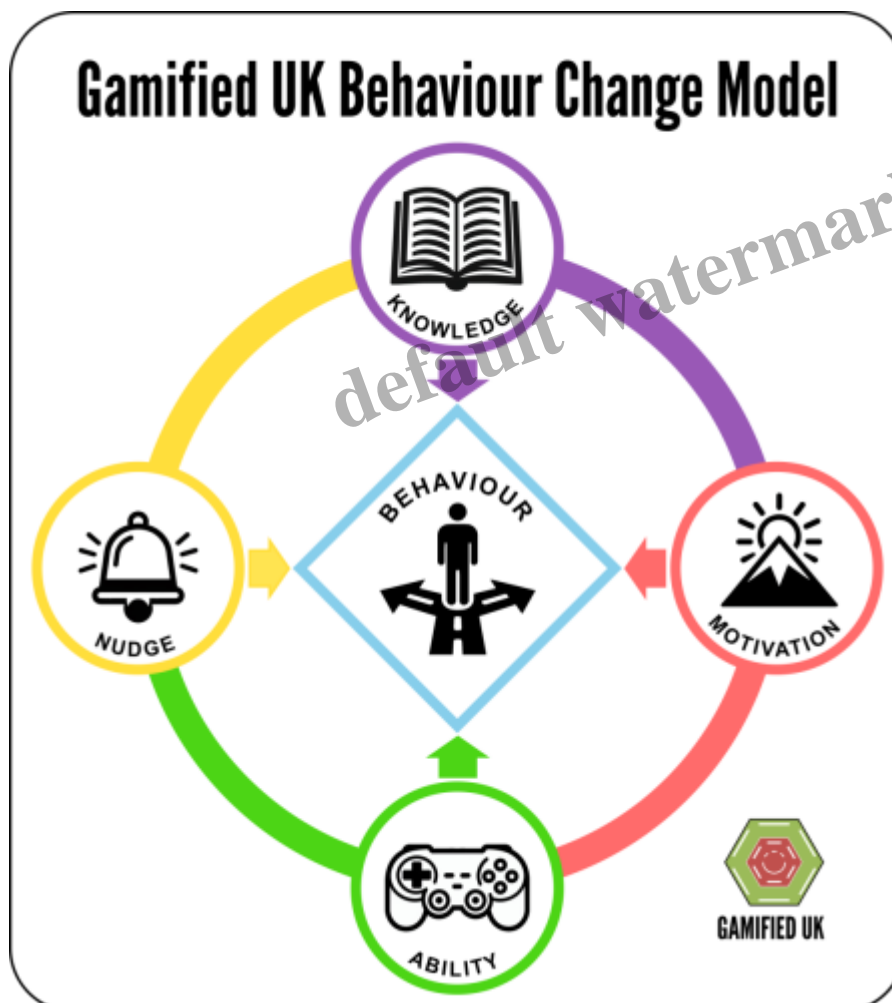
Marczewski Behaviour Change Model

The **Behaviour Change Model** provides four key tools to help influence user behaviour?:

1. **Motivation:** Why do users act? What drives them to engage?
2. **Knowledge:** Do users understand what they need to do and why it matters?
3. **Ability:** Are they capable of performing the desired behaviour, or are there barriers in the way?
4. **Nudge:** What subtle prompts can steer users towards action without force?

Example in Practice: In a fitness app:

- **Motivation:** Highlight benefits like improved health or community encouragement.
- **Knowledge:** Provide video tutorials or step-by-step guides to show users how to perform exercises safely and correctly.
- **Ability:** Tailor workouts to different fitness levels or time constraints to reduce obstacles.
- **Nudge:** Use streak notifications or friendly reminders to help users stay consistent.



Marczewski Behaviour Change Model

Integration

Behaviour sets the stage for all other elements. Without understanding what users do now and what drives them, you can't expect mechanics or motivators to work. Nudges (Behaviour) might evoke curiosity (Emotion), which drives users to interact with features like unlocking hidden achievements

(Mechanics). Behaviour is the “why” behind every system decision.

2. Motivation: Understanding the “Why”

If behaviour sets the stage, then motivation is the engine that powers user action. Without motivation, even the most beautifully designed system will fail to engage. The **RAMP Framework** and **Three Layers of Motivation** are invaluable tools for unpacking what drives users and ensuring you’re tapping into both their intrinsic and extrinsic needs.

RAMP Framework

Motivation is built on four key intrinsic drivers??:

- **Relatedness:** The need to feel connected to others.
- **Autonomy:** A desire for control and the ability to make choices.
- **Mastery:** The drive to improve, grow, and succeed.
- **Purpose:** A sense of contributing to something bigger than oneself.

Three Layers of Motivation

This model extends motivation beyond intrinsic needs to include the following?:

1. **Base Needs:** Foundational requirements like safety and financial security. Without these, engagement is impossible.
2. **Emotional Needs:** Intrinsic motivators like mastery, autonomy, and relatedness.
3. **Trivial Needs:** Extrinsic motivators such as badges, points, or prizes. These can be effective in short-term engagement but should be used sparingly.

Example in Practice: In the same fitness app:

- **Base Needs:** Ensure essential features like basic progress tracking are free and accessible.
- **Emotional Needs:** Allow users to customise their fitness goals (Autonomy) and track their progress visually (Mastery).
- **Trivial Needs:** Reward users with badges or leaderboard spots for completing challenges to provide instant gratification.

Integration

Motivation bridges behaviour and emotion. Helping users achieve mastery (Motivation) sparks pride (Emotion), which is reinforced through mechanics like leaderboards and trophies. Without understanding users’ intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, mechanics lack purpose, and emotions lack depth.

3. Emotion: Crafting Meaningful and Memorable Experiences

Emotion is the soul of gamification. It's what transforms functional systems into memorable experiences. By understanding the full spectrum of emotions, from positive feelings like pride and joy to negative motivators like urgency and alarm, you can craft journeys that resonate deeply with users.

The Emotional Spectrum

Emotions in gamification can range from positive to negative, and both have their place when used thoughtfully. Key emotions include:

- **Positive:** Joy, pride, gratitude, hope.
- **Complex:** Curiosity, immersion, surprise.
- **Negative (but useful):** Fear, urgency, shame, sadness.

How to Apply Emotions

Let's link these emotions to specific techniques:

- **Hope:** Use progress trackers or aspirational goals to give users a sense of optimism. *Example:* "You're just one step away from your weekly goal!"
- **Pride:** Showcase personal achievements through trophies, badges, or completion certificates. *Example:* A fitness app might celebrate a user as the "Workout Champion of the Week."
- **Curiosity:** Incorporate mystery rewards or hidden features to spark exploration. *Example:* Unlock secret workouts after consistent engagement.
- **Urgency:** Use countdowns or limited-time challenges to encourage immediate action. *Example:* "Only 3 hours left to join this group challenge!"

Tying Emotions to the User Journey

The **User Journey Phases** naturally align with specific emotions:

1. **Discovery Phase:** Spark curiosity and hope to draw users in.
2. **Onboarding Phase:** Use joy and love to create a welcoming environment and instill confidence.
3. **Immersion Phase:** Evoke pride and gratitude as users progress and contribute.
4. **Mastery Phase:** Reward users with recognition, amplifying pride and satisfaction.
5. **Replay Phase:** Introduce urgency or curiosity to encourage ongoing engagement.

There are a lot of emotions you can consider, here is my little Emotions Spectrum to think about!

Gamified UK Emotions Spectrum

HOPE	FEAR
GRATITUDE	ANGER
JOY	SADNESS
PRIDE	SHAME
SURPRISE	ALARM
LOVE	HATE
DESIRE	DISGUST
IMMERSION	ISOLATION
CURIOSITY	DISINTEREST
SATISFACTION	FRUSTRATION
CALM	URGENCY

Emotions Spectrum

Integration

Emotion doesn't exist in isolation; it works alongside behaviour, motivation, and mechanics. For instance, a leaderboard (Mechanic) might trigger competitive pride (Emotion) while reinforcing mastery (Motivation). Designing for emotion ensures your system not only functions but connects. However, it may also drive frustration if the desire to be at the top starts to outweigh the joy and pride of the work you do to be there.

4. Mechanics: The Tools of Engagement

Mechanics are the tools that bring your system to life. Points, badges, narratives, challenges—these are the tangible elements users interact with. But good mechanics aren't one-size-fits-all. They must align with user behaviours, motivations, and emotions to succeed.

HEXAD Framework

The **HEXAD** Framework links mechanics to six user types??:

1. **Achievers:** Progression systems like levels, badges, and leaderboards.
2. **Socialisers:** Group challenges, chat features, or team-based goals.
3. **Free Spirits:** Exploration mechanics, hidden features, or personalisation options.
4. **Philanthropists:** Altruistic tasks, mentoring opportunities, or charity-based challenges.
5. **Players:** Points, streaks, and prizes to drive extrinsic engagement.
6. **Disruptors:** Creative tools, voting systems, or user-generated challenges.

Example in Practice: In a fitness app:

- **Achievers:** Track personal bests with detailed statistics and achievement badges.
- **Socialisers:** Join group fitness challenges or share progress in team chats.
- **Free Spirits:** Customise workout routines or explore new types of training.
- **Philanthropists:** Mentor others in the community or contribute to group goals.
- **Players:** Earn rewards for completing consistent workouts or maintaining streaks.
- **Disruptors:** Create personal challenges or vote on new app features.

Integration

Mechanics must support the other elements of the BMEM Framework. For example:

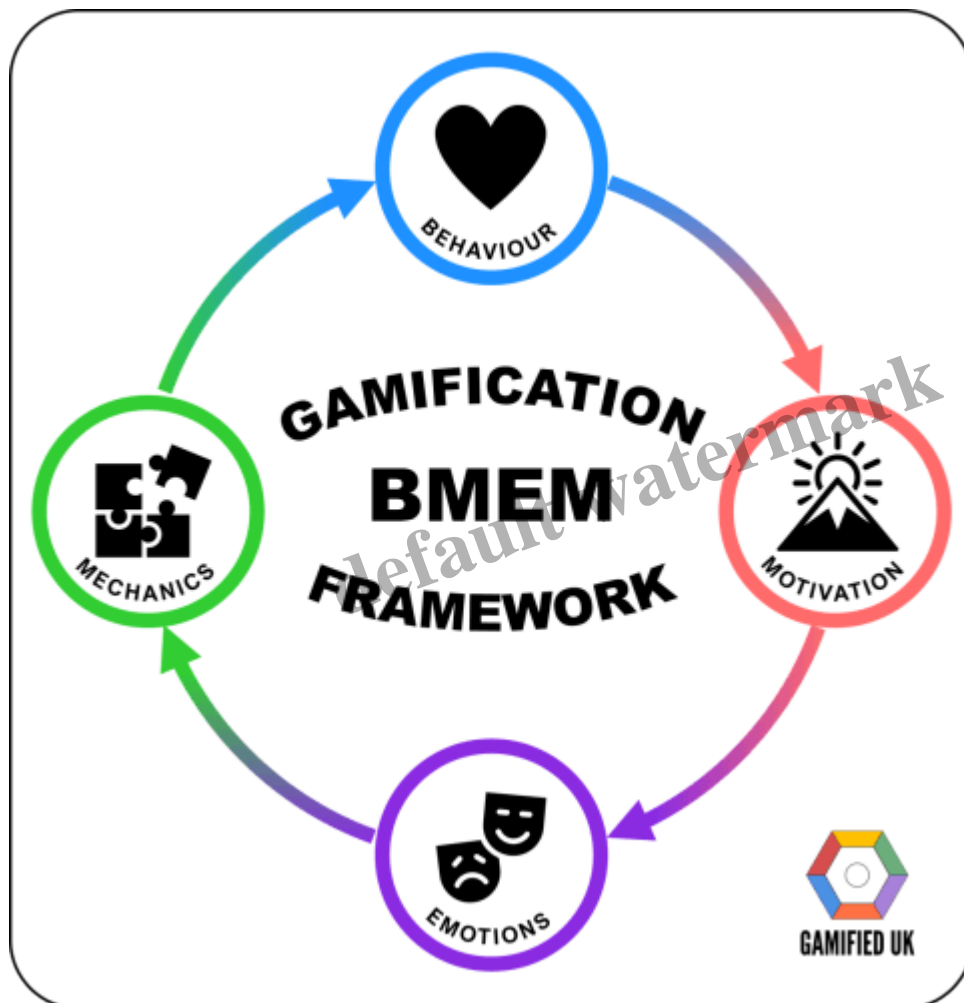
- **A leaderboard** (Mechanic) appeals to Achievers and Players, reinforcing mastery (Motivation) and evoking pride (Emotion).
- **Hidden features** (Mechanic) intrigue Free Spirits, sparking curiosity (Emotion) and encouraging exploration (Behaviour).
- **Dynamic difficulty scaling** (Mechanic) appeals to Achievers, reinforcing mastery (Motivation) while evoking pride and determination (Emotion). It also supports behaviour by keeping users engaged with tailored challenges.
- **Collaborative quests** (Mechanic) attract Socialisers and Philanthropists, fostering relatedness and purpose (Motivation). These evoke camaraderie and gratitude (Emotion) while encouraging teamwork and shared problem-solving (Behaviour).
- **Time-limited rewards** (Mechanic) engage Players and Achievers, leveraging extrinsic rewards and mastery (Motivation). They evoke urgency and excitement (Emotion) while driving consistent engagement (Behaviour).

Bringing It All Together

Here's how the BMEM Framework integrates into a cohesive system:

1. **Behaviour:** Use nudges and remove barriers to drive daily actions.
2. **Motivation:** Leverage RAMP to address intrinsic needs while using extrinsic rewards judiciously.
3. **Emotion:** Map emotions to the user journey, crafting moments of pride, curiosity, and urgency.
4. **Mechanics:** Align HEXAD types and associated mechanics to ensure personalisation and relevance.

Together, these components create systems that not only engage but inspire.



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Final Thoughts

Gamification is a toolbox full of complex tools and gadgets. As with any tools, you need to know how and when to use them to get the best results. By thoughtfully combining Behaviour, Motivation, Emotion, and Mechanics, you can create gamified systems that go beyond surface-level engagement to deliver real, meaningful value. Systems that not only entertain but inspire, resonate, and endure.

Want to explore gamification frameworks in depth? Visit [Gamified UK](#) to dive into the tools and ideas

that make gamification great.

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Category

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