



## Analogue vs Digital Gamification

### Description

When looking at gamification, it can be a daunting task. There are dozens of gurus, platforms, off the shelf products, bespoke products, decks of cards, frameworks, snake oil sellers, blogs and more. There are so many choices, one could be forgiven for getting a little lost.

However, one of the choices that doesn't seem to get spoken about as much as some other things (like the latest magical framework). That's the choice between digital (online) or analogue (offline) gamification.

### Digital Gamification

Digital gamification is generally online. So for instance, it could be a reward system built into a website. It could be online learning materials that are game-like and on a learning management system (LMS). You get the idea. Generally, they are designed to be experienced on your own (physically) on a platform that is convenient for you or integrated directly into a platform that you already use. That doesn't mean there can't be team based events – think World of Warcraft (MMO) Raids!

Digital solutions come in a couple of main flavours, the quick and easy off the shelf solution and the more expensive – but solution specific – bespoke varieties. Both have advantages and disadvantages, personally I am a fan of going the bespoke route, ensuring you get the exact solution for your problem. That said, there are many good providers who provide a bit of both. A customisable off the shelf solution that fits in the middle both in price and time to launch.

### Analogue Gamification

Analogue gamification tends to be “low tech” in comparison to digital gamification. It can include board games, card games, workshops, post-it notes and more. The key is that it usually happens in live groups, with participants in the same room or location. A very simple example is having a scoreboard on a whiteboard in an office, with a trophy being put on the desk of the top-performing teams.

Other examples include using board games and card decks to help people to understand complex topics and training. A popular example is to use an escape room that uses puzzles and games to help teach concepts to the participants, but require strong leadership, teamwork and communication to be victorious.

## Hybrid Gamification

This blends digital and analogue gamification. So some aspects may exist in an online world, whilst others exist and are experienced in the real world. In games a fantastic example of this is Pokemon GO!. Whilst most of the game is experienced online, in isolation, there are team-based events that require large groups of people to be in the same place at the same time to be victorious. Where I work, we used to have a popular Pokemon gym location outside. I would often see large groups of players stood there, chatting and laughing as they took down some monstrous Pokemon.

Other examples of this can be seen in events where there is an online gamified tracking system, but the activities that gain you points are taking place mostly in the real world.

## Pros and Cons

All of these types of gamification have pros and cons, just like most things in life. What works best for you will often depend on your problem, your budget, your time scales and what is available at the time.

If you have a small team of 6 people who are all in one room, it does not make sense to invest tens of thousands of pounds into a bespoke digital solution to your engagement or training problems. It would be much more cost-effective to buy off the shelf products or create some physical games to play and experience as a team. [www.gamestorming.com](http://www.gamestorming.com) has some great ideas on how to do this actually. Being in the same room as each other also plays strongly into RAMP – specifically Relatedness! (Yeah – I did it, I threw a framework at you!)

However, if you have thousands of employees or members, then the **scalability** and relative cost of a digital solution starts to make more sense. It is very difficult to get people into one room across multiple locations and even countries. Running facilitated physical games can also be very expensive, time-consuming and hard to organise.

Digital solutions, both off the shelf and bespoke, can offer a much easier way of connecting those large groups of people both in real-time and asynchronously. Often these types of solution allow you to use them at times that best suit you, rather than at the same time as everyone else! But, they can be very expensive and can take some time to get working, especially if they are being designed for long term programmes. Here you need to have good analytics (another thing that digital solutions are usually good at providing) and an understanding of what you are trying to achieve!

Hybrid solutions offer a nice middle ground, where players can experience face to face gamification whilst potentially retaining all the benefits and scalability of digital gamification. In-room events can continue to have an impact after they have finished with a good digital, online campaign reinforcing everything that was achieved in the main event.

## Conclusion

As I said, the best solution will vary from context to context. So many things affect the decision. The key is to really understand the problem that you are trying to solve with gamification, then choosing a route to a solution that fits the need. Never just go and buy a solution then try and find a problem to fit it!

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### Tags

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3. online gamification
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