



## The Andrzej & Roman Show – Episode 1

### Description

It's finally here!! The Andrzej & Roman Show Episode 1: In the Beginning there was gamification!

You can listen to it here <https://anchor.fm/andrzej-roman/episodes/Episode-1-In-the-Beginning-There-Was-Gamification-e1frlst>

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Below is the full transcript if you are interested ?

[00:00:00]

**Andrzej:** Well, welcome to the first and Andrzej and Roman show. Roman, say hello?

**Roman:** Hello.

**Andrzej:** So I'm Andrzej, if you haven't guessed that's Roman and we are collectively ancient gamification experts. I say ancient because in the world of gamification 10 years, 12 years, whatever it is now seems quite ancient. Doesn't it? Roman?

**Roman:** Oh, but yeah. It's it's yeah, we are the old guys. That's true.

**Andrzej:** Yeah. We're the old ones that's right. I keep being reminded by my children. Just how old I actually am.

As the jingle says, welcome to the show. This is bit of an experiment to start with, [00:01:00] but we're hoping that this is going to go on and be kind of, sort of a regular occurrence for people. And the idea is Roman and I are going to discuss gamification the state of gamification how it can be applied in the real world a bit more.

So not just the theory stuff and our feelings on things, but also a little bit about how we might use it to maybe improve things that we aren't happy with in the universe at the moment or how we might have used them to achieve certain goals around current events and trends and all that kind of stuff.

Yeah, that sounds about right. Doesn't it.

**Roman:** Yeah, it sounds really like a plan. And I really have to say that I'm, I'm a little bit excited now sitting here and talking with you because it was a long time ago that we talked last time and yeah, thanks that you got in touch with me and got, this thing started.

**Andrzej:** Ah, no, I see. So for all those who are uninitiated, so Roman and I have been in the industry now for, I think I started just the end of 2010, which is [00:02:00] officially started. Let's just, well, we'll go into our histories in a bit, but officially started as a gamification person around 2010 Roman. When do you reckon you got started officially with the word gamification?

**Roman:** Oh, officially with the only thing I know for sure is that in August. 2009, we changed the the name of the company, or we started with the company officially. So it should have been I would say a few weeks months before

**Andrzej:** I see that predates Badgeville to some extent. So that's impressive stuff.

I'm a nerd for gamification history as you'll find out through these shows. So I thought a little bit of background on us, just a couple of minutes talking about ourselves. And then I thought we could just sort of kick off with our thoughts on gamification as we see it right now and see how that evolves over the shows.

**Roman:** Yeah, let's do that. Let's sound right into it. I'm really excited.

**Andrzej:** Excellent. Right [00:03:00] then. So, yeah, I'm Andrzej Marczewski. I have been a gamification consultant expert writer, author interviewee. Lecturer all kinds of stuff, consultant as well, practitioner as well. I might add since around 2010, 2011, and I have kind of had a love of gamification since I realized it was a word. Now to caveat that I've actually been involved in games and gamifications since I was probably three years old because I'm very lucky whilst not a millennial. I did grow up with computers in the house all times. My first memory of a computer, was an Apple II playing Star Trek on that, which was kind of carry those sort of letters on the screen that represented spaceships.

And so I go back a very long way with that. And I, I remember him building me video games. Things to help me with my times tables, we'll have to move a train across the screen. [00:04:00] He wrote for me. So games have been a big part of my life for really, really long time. And without realizing it, they have influenced everything that I do for a very, very long time now.

So when I discovered that gamification was actually a thing, I couldn't be more excited because it meant that this crazy kind of way my brain worked, that broke everything down into quests and designed everything to feel like a game. I was doing web design and everything. I did look like games and I was kind of doing learning materials and they will look like games, all this kind of stuff turned out there was, you know, it was a real thing.

But it didn't get named until much, much later in my life. So yeah, my world of gamification. Really goes back to very early childhood because my parents and my, my sort of now utopian view that games actually do have the power to change the world in some way. Yeah, that's, that's kinda my very brief, slightly distorted history.

**Roman:** That's great. Do you still remember when you when you heard about when you [00:05:00] heard the term gamification for the first time? Because I don't.

**Andrzej:** Right. So I was working at Capgemini and I decided I was going to be a blogger because everyone needs a blog. That was a big thing. We all we ever wanted to blog.

So I was going to blog about social media. That was my biggest thing. And I was writing about something and one of the guys I worked with said, oh, we've got this we've got this guy coming over to talk who. It's into this thing called gamification. And I think you might be interested cause I know you're because I also used to review video games.

So from 2006 onwards I was reviewing video games and everyone knew that I was into games. He said, there's a guy called Gabe Zichermann and he's going to come and give us a bit of a talk on gamification. And I was like, wow, there's a word for what I, what, I'm what I'm thinking. Let's, let's do a bit of research.

And so I started to look into it. So a few weeks later I did some research and I started doing a little bit of writing around the topic because it's something really captured my attention. What I was writing was utter bollocks. I'd got this bug of kind of this sounds really interesting. And then we had this talk with Gabe [00:06:00] and it just opened my eyes to the fact that there were people out there who thought the same way as me.

And that there were people trying to make this into something real, not just the kind of A loose idea of how games might impact the universe a little bit. It was kind of, you know, you have that. I think at that point, Sebastian Deterding's a definition of well, it game mechanics in non-game context was floating around and yeah, so that was that exact moment around 2010 that Gabe Zichermann entered my life.

**Roman:** Okay. The one and only really. So we, I think we both all Gabe Zichermann probably big time for that. Yeah. Because it's, it was to be honest I don't know exactly when I heard about gamification so the term gamification for the first time, but I studied economics and I was always interested in behavioral psychology for economics, because I was really disappointed when I started that, that everything we talked about when it came [00:07:00] to customers or employees it was only about the rational

types of the homo economicus. So, so I was really disappointed about that. So I started to dig into the topic of behavioral psychology myself, and then I I, I don't know exactly when I think it was around

2008 or something like that. I came across the book of Gabe Zichermann game-based marketing.

And so I got hooked by, by this clear it was the first time that I read something that clearly connected the, as something very business-like like marketing. Games. So the game industry and the and the psychology behind that. And so this is how I got to now get sicker, man. And then I, I realized, okay, I was always so interested in, in behavioral psychology.

And of course there is some kind of, let's say [00:08:00] niche within this space. That's much more about the, the, the, the, the playful side of behavioral psychology is so much more about the psychology of the homoludens. And this is when I started or got inspired by digging deeper into let's say more positive psychology, also game theory and other types of psychology, that role much more focused on the playful behavior and So Gabe Zichermann also for me was one of the first guys, or was probably the guy who got me inspired to the whole topic. And let me find out, find out that there's an area or an industry or niche coming up with that kind of term. And with similar intentions that I always thought about when I was only interested in behavioral psychology.

And then a few months later or weeks later, and then the point is I also started to write about the topic, but not with my own blog, because I had no clue how to do that, [00:09:00] whatever. So I started to write comments on blogs of companies. So when they talked about, okay, I'm employee motivation and then told on their blogs how they did it or how that is a problem for them or challenge, then I started to answer below that.

And so I got in touch with the companies and we started discussions. Okay. In, in that kind of context, I stumbled across Mario Herger. And so then we found out that he's an Austrian guy, so a German speaking guy living in Silicon valley. So, I was living in Munich, but my family was living in Silicon valley.

And so we arranged a meeting. I invited him to Oktoberfest in Munich. And this was, yeah, I don't know exactly if that was, if I miss something right now, because I don't. Yeah. It was really something that I suddenly, I was within that kind of industry and then it [00:10:00] worked out. So it was, yeah, not planned.

**Andrzej:** I can't remember when we first met, I was thinking about this the other day when we first. Obviously we started talking about this during this podcast in. We originally started talking about this last year sometime, and we've been trying to pull something together for years. But last year we started talking about this and then only a couple of weeks ago where we just said, right, let's just get on and do it.

And I was trying to think, when was the first time we came across each other? And I don't remember the first time you and I spoke, it was over Twitter. I know it was Twitter.

**Roman:** Oh, really?

**Andrzej:** It's definitely on Twitter. Cause that was how that everybody was on Twitter. But I remember the first time I physically met you was at one of the gamification world congresses.

Yeah. In Madrid. Was it Barcelona? Was that the one where our names were on that massive screen, outside the cinema? It was it that one, was it the one after that where we would have, we had a [00:11:00] bigger stage and that was the one after that. This is to take taking history out of sequence

slightly.

But the first one I did was that. I walked around the corner of this road in I'm sure as Madrid. It was just a cinema screen with my face on it. Massive thing with my face on it, as I was walking with Toby bear's foot. And I think somebody else, and we just saw these, this street and we're like, oh, okay.

That seems a bit different. Having been used to doing little tiny talks in squashed up rooms. But no. So I remember you doing this talk and we've been speaking before, and you, you had a friend with you or a colleague with you and you hadn't planned anything. It just, it didn't seem you had planning.

You basically had an argument with him from the one end of this room to the other about what engagement was. And he was slowly walking down it, everyone at first thought you were just having an actual argument with this random stranger cause you had kept him secret. And this was the most bizarre thing [00:12:00] I've ever seen.

I've only ever really. Not everyone got it at all. And trust me when I say not everyone got it. But it was one of those moments where I just thought I've got to get to know this person better, because this is such an odd thing to do. What was quite a big event? Just having this random conversation with a guy who came in off the street.

Yeah.

**Roman:** Yeah. That was, that was fun. That was Oliver Rothstein. Actually. He's a good friend of mine. He's also living in Munich. And the point was that When I was invited to the Gamification World Congress in the same year there was a very famous talk from Barack Obama. So he did the speech together with a comedian.

Oh, I have to look at that again. So the point is what he did and I was really fascinated by this talk. He, he, I think it was the once a year, the, the U S president is giving a talk to in a special events to, to journalists in a very fun way. And. Obama was always open for jokes. [00:13:00] So he did a, he did this talk and there was the comedian standing behind him.

And while Barack Obama always talked, so to set everything in a very politely way, the comedian who played the evil Barrack Obama, or let's say the honest one translated in real time, what Obama actually wants to say without being politely. And I was really fascinated about that. I love that. So when I when I was invited to talk about to talk at the Gamification World Congress, I immediately knew that I want to talk about the biggest issue.

That from my point of view, the industry had, had. So back then had, and still has that's the misunderstanding about points and extrinsic rewards, but I thought about, okay, how could I actually do. And so I thought about, Hey, I will be Barack Obama and my good friend, Oliver Rothstein will be the evil one.

And, and we will, we will try to copy you what's Barack Obama did, but the [00:14:00] point is you really have to do X. You have to exercise that it's, it's difficult because of course we have to act together. We have UVS exactly. To know what I want to say that I have to tell him how he should say it in a very honest way, how I would laugh to say it directly, but I can't, I have to be politely.

So, and so we didn't have the time to do that. We have it because he had his job, I made it mine. And so the day before. Oh, when we met with our families. We decided that, Hey, we want to go to Barcelona. We take our families with us and we make a longer weekend out of that. And so we met the day before in Barcelona.

And the point is because we didn't have time before to exercise, we decided that in instead, I will give my talk and then we have to find a way where we bring what I want to say, but I don't want to say politely because I thought that if I say it politely a lot of, let's say the seriousness of the problem, will, will go [00:15:00] away, will go under. And so we decided that we try to bring this kind of argument, harder discussion on the stage in real time together. And so we only decided, okay, I will give my talk and there will be a particular point within my talk where I can go on, but it would be great if you Oliver would come on stage just disrupt me, and then we will go on from that, from there.

And so it was a lot of fun actually, but the point is, as you say it some people didn't get it and I think we should have planned this a little bit better. So it has to come. It has to be, it has so that it would have been much clearer what the intention was.

**Andrzej:** I think this comes to really interesting point that I think possibly is a good one for us to start with actually. Correct me if I'm wrong, but why do none of us gamify our talks?

I have never watched a gamification talk or been to a gamification [00:16:00] event, where outside of having a treasure hunt of some description, there has been anything that resembles gamification in any parts of it. And I can't work out why, other than the fact that it keeps coming back to the fact that it's really hard to do so.

Am I wrong? I've I missed something. Well, I've been going to all these talks over the years and the last year I've not been doing much speaking. Has everyone started gamifying everything suddenly? Or is it all still PowerPoint?

**Roman:** No. So from my point of view, I think you're totally right. No, no one did.

And, and I, I didn't do it either. But to be honest, I, I think there's a reason for that or, or I think there's a reason why I never did it. Because I perhaps I it's, I may make it easy for myself, but I think it's not helpful. Let me say it this way from my point of view, if we, if we think about, so the point is that, just to make that clear, if we're talking about gamification, we are talking about that.

We want to achieve [00:17:00] something. It's, it's a gamification it's, that's not the definition right now. Yeah. But gaming is a discipline that wants to achieve something. That games can do. Okay. And it's not just about video games also about game-like situations. And so games are a role model for a particular behavior.

So if I put the for a particular human behavior, and this is what we want to achieve in other situations. So the point is, if we think about why games can achieve that from my point of view, it's especially the case, because games is so playing a game is something like a journey that unfolds in front of you over time because of the decisions or the activities you do.

Okay. And so of course, if we are, if I'm giving a talk about a topic, I have 20 minutes, so there is no

time [00:18:00] for. It's it's really difficult to create a journey in a very short period of time, that feels like a journey for the audience. And then, so that's the first part. And the second part is that the journey unfolds in front of you because of the activities you do.

So the point is in a classic keynote, whatever, there is no way for the audience to do something. Okay. And so from my point of view, it's everything you try to, put into this short period of time that because you want to do something that's a little bit game-like is small. Like our I don't know it's, you force, you try to force it into a situation, into a context that's just not made for it.

**Andrzej:** Ah, now that this is, this is what I was hoping you'll get to. So. We will talk about definitions in a moment. I think it's important [00:19:00] as this is our kind of intro show that we both give our definitions. I think I've tried to gamify a talk and it went horribly. And I, I learned something about human behavior that I hadn't worked out at that point.

So I actually built an app called it was originally called bullshit. Bingo. So gamification, bingo. The idea was for every time I used a particularly buzzy key word that was awful that I deliberately thrown in, you ticked it off on the app and at the, the, the first person's get all of it, their app would suddenly just yell out in the middle of the room bullshit.

And I thought this was brilliant. And I was so pleased with myself. I'd built this app and I've done it all. And within 20 seconds, somebody had just hit the bullshit button, just the, they ticked everything. And that was my first experience of really understanding how

**Roman:** so just to make that clear, he cheated

**Andrzej:** No, now the app, so this is the thing, and I think this is a great topic for another talk, but he hadn't cheated because I hadn't told him he couldn't do it.[00:20:00]

When I started, I'd laid out the ideal way of playing the game, I hadn't told him he couldn't do certain things. So he hadn't cheated. He had just decided to speed the process up slightly. Yeah, exactly. And I said, we, we will do, we will do a whole podcast on, on rules and cheating and stuff.

Cause there are some, there are some good examples, but . it was my first sort of introduction to how little I understood about human behavior at the time. So, I mean, this is very And it was that kind of, I got this idealistic view in my head of people who engage with this cause it's different.

It's fun. It's not a standard talk. And that was the point where I realized that actually, when people come to talks, they expect a PowerPoint presentation and you're talking to them. So I've done talks without presentations and people just drift off. As soon as they got a PowerPoint presentation, as long as there's not too much happening, they seem to engage better.

It's it's this really, it seems so counterintuitive. And I think that's exactly why it works because it is [00:21:00] counter-intuitive as long as you get the balance of what you're talking about and what's on the screen, right? People seem to engage much better than if you try and go really extreme and do something that uncomfortable with.

And that was the second part. It was that forced fun. I'd given them this thing and gone do this and he'd just gone. I'll do it my way. I'd kind of, I overplayed my hand a bit early on in my career at that

point. Had I thought that was one of these really big lessons for me at the conferences was don't try and be too clever because it never seems to work very well when people are very clever.

**Roman:** I love that. And it's cool, but, but I really have to appreciate you there. I feel the effort that you put into it by programming by coding the app and everything else.

**Andrzej:** Yeah, I was, I was, I was quite chuffed with myself.

I think that I had to go that side cause it was, I've always found it really interesting going to all these talks and we all talk about engaging with the audience, especially when you talk about [00:22:00] engagement with the audience and you get one of those speakers who is so dull.

So unbelievably dull talking about how they created this thing that engaged 10,000 people in three minutes and you're sat there going you didn't, you absolutely couldn't have achieved this because you are the most boring human being I've ever met". Cause we all tried to actually, I, my favorite talk ever, I came out to Motorhead's "The Game".

And my whole talk was I, I literally came out arms raised a round of applause from the people in the front row who knew me. And my whole talk was done to music. And essentially I just played the music, put the lyrics up on the screen, talked through the lyrics and told everyone they're wonderful and got huge round of applause at the end.

They learned nothing, but I felt great at the end of it.

I think to get people sort of used to us and any differences that may be initially between us. Cause we've, we've always walked a fine line between arguing with each other and getting on with each other over the um, especially [00:23:00] over the use of points in gamification, which I'm not going. I'm not going there yet.

We went there on Facebook this morning. I'm not going there now. But what is your current? And I'm to say working definition, not your textbook definition that you give that you give at lectures, but your day-to-day, if somebody says to you, what's gamification, how do you sell it to them or explain it to them in as few words as possible?

**Roman:** It's it's let me have a think about it because I have to translate it. Exactly. So for me now, for me gamification is a contextual design, to encourage people, to keep trying with joy. Okay.

**Andrzej:** Okay. Interesting.

**Roman:** That the point is that for me, fun is a neurochemical reward to encourage people to keep trying to do something.

And so gamification wants to. Replicate that in different contexts. So, and this is why I think it's a [00:24:00] contextual design. And because it's different, depending on the context you are, and the context also defines of gamification from my point of view as possible or not, or make sense or not, or if you rather should go with something else.

And the, the point is it's for me, gamification is about not about getting you started to do something because to be honest, I think there are much better ways to get you started to do something, but it's



always about. Keeping you as a, to, to get you to keep doing something. And so, and because this is the, the, the, nobody know what it is.

If it's about using a software do your work, whatever it is stay a happy customer, interact with us as a brand, as a brand, use my, my product, whatever it is it's always about. I want you as the user to keep using this, to keep doing this. And because I, it's not that it's less about what I want you [00:25:00] to do.

It's more about how I want you to do it. And I want you, I don't want to, to create a product that everyone is using, but no one is enjoying. So there are ways to create something to do something where I let people. So. Decides to keep doing it, even if they don't enjoy it. If that, if that's the case, perhaps I increase the KPIs, the numbers, because people are keep people keeping doing something, but if they don't enjoy it, enjoy it more than before.

From my point of view, I have failed as a gamification designer. So it's much more about the how, and then second about what you need to do, of course, as well, when a company comes and says, Hey, Roman, we need your help. Of course, there is something they're telling me, Hey, we want them to do that. So there is the what and the result that we need to achieve, but it's my work.

It's my, my responsibility to [00:26:00] achieve that result. And the same time they enjoy it. If that doesn't happen with the joy I failed. And so I need this kind of fun. And as I said, fun, for me, it's nothing is as a neurochemical reward. And so this is why I came up with the definition. Gamification is contextual design. To encourage people, to keep trying and with the, yeah, with joy.

**Andrzej:** Okay. Let me say now, folks, this is where you'll see we started. So our definition is diverged slightly here because Roman and I, we came from different backgrounds into gamification and we quite often, our arguments often revolve around the use of rewards at the beginning of experiences.

That's kind of where a lot of our disagreements come.

You're the interesting thing we will definition and something which I think has always been missing from definitions a lot is actually the focus on continued use. [00:27:00] Um, As kind of the key. And I say that because a lot of gamification just doesn't do that very well. It just focuses on the now and getting the most out of the next five minutes and then just trying to keep those little five minutes things happening.

And I think they, they, they work on very short kind of engagement loops rather than that longer term engagement loops that that we now kind of talk about with narratives and that kind of stuff. But I mean, back in the day was give them a point pat, on the back cause they've done well, they'll do it again.

Which has this place. We'll, we'll talk about that more all the time. So the reason I asked that is. It's something I've struggled with. And, you know, I have spent years working around the definitions of gamification it's it's, it's probably one of the top three things I'm known for in the industry is wittering on about the game, the definition.

And some days I think it's important some days I think it's not. And I think my mistake over the years has been thinking about it from [00:28:00] us as a clever, a perspective as possible. I wanted to be perceived as being clever. That makes sense, you know, that, you know, that kind of thing, cause

everyone's all got degrees and PhDs and all this kind of stuff.

And so I came up with all kinds of definitions. Then about a year ago I realized. As I was coming out at completely the wrong way. Not, I wasn't like everything I'd done was wrong, but my, my, the way I was trying to describe things was wrong. I was trying to be too clever. I was trying to be too sort of verbose go on about stuff.

So I completely changed the way I think about it because I don't, I wouldn't talk about fun. I refused to speak about fun for years. And I also got in this trap of we're not making games. And so I refuse to talk about gamification in terms of actual games as well. Cause we create, you know, a created the whole taxonomy of how games gamification game-based is, all these sorts of things are different and blah, blah, blah.

And then I realized that they're all fighting the same battle. They're all trying to do the same thing. They're trying to make people [00:29:00] from a employer's perspective or business perspective. They're trying to make people do more of something from your perspective or my perspective.

They're trying to, it's trying to make things that I'm doing. More interesting. So I came up with this, this definition of very loose definition of making things more game-like or, or even a game. And then about a week later, I, I almost sort of, I didn't throw it away, but I, I redefined it and I'll just read the exact definition that I came up with "the process of making something a bit less shit and a bit more fun".

I was joking until I realized how accurate that was for the sorts of things I've been trying to do for years. I started saying this to people, even, even in businesses when I was talking to them and they were going, that makes sense. And I wasn't talking about games at all anymore. I was just talking about the behaviors and what we were trying to, what we're actually trying to achieve is to, is to make things better in some way.[00:30:00]

I found talking to people about that in the last few months, in those kinds of terms made it much easier than to understand once they got that they didn't care so much about that journey. Part of it, how they got to that, what they were focused on was the outcome is we're going to actually make this better for people to go through whatever it is.

However, what if we look at, you know, is it a learning program is a, do we want people to use our loyalty scheme, whatever it is, it has to make something better than it was before you got to it. And our way of doing that is by using lessons from games and things we've learned be they mechanics methods, behavioral, psychology, that kind of thing.

**Roman:** Okay. So this, this is where you're going. So I think the last point was important, because of course making some, making stuff better is difficult. So that can be anything. But of course, now you define what you mean with.

**Andrzej:** So I think there was a, there was a reason I, [00:31:00] I stepped away from talking about things like game mechanics and game, non game context and things like that because no one can define what a game mechanic is in gamification terms, we get it wrong.

Game mechanics have black boxes of rules. And we talk about all kinds of things. You know, we talk about narratives as the game mechanic and then not at all. But I got really caught up in the academic

side of that. But people didn't understand what I was talking about when I spoke to somebody who, when you, when you speak to people who don't know about gamification and you start talking about that kind of stuff, they go blank.

You say to them, we are going to make whatever is your, whatever problem you've got. We're going to make it easier or better in some way, for those who are involved in that problem. And we're going to try and use something we learned in games to do it. They kind of. Right. Okay. And then you can start talking about behaviors and psychology and that, but you've, you've kind of got them on the hook.

Cause you've, you've already told them, we talk about definitions you know, the use of game [00:32:00] mechanics and non-game contexts. It's a great definition. It's very technically correct, but it doesn't actually describe anything. It could be. That could be anything for any kind of purpose. Yeah. And it's that I'm going to solve your problems.

I'm going to try to solve your problems. And your problem is you want people to do something or more of something and they usually don't do it because the process is in some way, difficult or unenjoyable and lots of little leavers you can pull. But I found I could never get to that part of the conversation because they'd glazed over already because I started talking about game mechanics and leaderboards or badges and points and all this kind of stuff. And they go, what? No, I want them to fill in their time sheets. So yeah, and I, it fascinates me because I would 10 years down the line more than that. And we still haven't got definition that everyone agrees on.

**Roman:** That's true. It's complex. So I, first of all, I like yours.

I like [00:33:00] your approach now. I think we are, we are looking at the right within the same, not in the right, I don't know, but in the same direction. So I, I really like that. And the interesting thing with the definition that you already said, that's the more well-known ones are using game mechanics and non game context, even that there already is some kind of problem because while and this is how really felt it while everyone. Thought about game now in non-game context means, okay, we are playing games now to solve a tax problem, for example. And because we think taxes have, have nothing to do with games, it's a non-game context, but that was never the case, how I thought about it. And I'm pretty sure because I already talked a lot with him about it with the Sebastian Deterding.

Is that from my point of view, it's not about where you are as a non-game context doesn't mean where you are using it, but it's more about if you from up [00:34:00] psychological way of think you are playing a game. So what I mean by that is let's imagine we are creating a serious game and a serious game for solving.

I don't know a medical issue. Okay. So 99% of the gamification industry would say, Hey, that's using games in a non game context. I saw, oh, game mechanics in a non-game context. So it's, it's gamification. So what I would argue and I fought for, for the last 10 years, I have argued that no, the point is people know that they are playing a game.

And because of that, they are in the game context because their brain is working differently. And so it's, it doesn't match the definition because for them it's about in game context and not in non-game context. And this is why I always differentiated between, are we creating serious games? Are we building game-based learning?

Are we building simulations? [00:35:00] So these are situations where someone knows that he's playing actually a game and is not working right now. So he has made a break, is sit down and take the controller into place. So he's in a totally different mood as if I would improve his actual work process so that he never realizes that he's playing a game because he's actually doing his work in real life.

But we redesigned the process that suddenly it became much more native, intuitive, enjoyable for him. And so this is how to use this is when you're using game mechanics and non-game context because Forrest brain, it's a non-game context. Can you follow?

**Andrzej:** Yeah, I'm going on the journey with you.

I think for me I, I, again, we spoken about it in the past and I, I struggled with this in certain ways, because. I to spend a long time creating taxonomies around what is a game [00:36:00] or isn't a game. Is it simulation? Is it whatever else? And I think where we've always argued is over where gamification starts and stops.

**Roman:** Yeah.

**Andrzej:** Cause I'm I'm very much of the opinion that, you know, very simplistic things can be considered gamification if they, if they fit within that definition of a game mechanic being used outside of an entertainment purpose, we'll go, we'll go with entertainment just to make it easier. And I know you've always been very against that.

You're kind of very points and badges. We shouldn't include these in, in proper talks about gamification. If they are the sole, if that's all that's there and it's just been designed as kind of that Pavlovian Skinner box. Behavioral psychology, do a thing, get a badge, do another thing, get two badges. And my view has always been well, it fits the definition that everyone accepts.

So we have to include it in gamification. We just don't have to like it.

**Roman:** [00:37:00] Interesting. Okay.

**Andrzej:** So my views of I've always been that this all sits in gamification now. All right. Let's rewind very slightly. So one of the things we all struggle with in the industry and you've come across this as well, is when somebody says gamification they very often mean serious game.

**Roman:** Yeah.

**Andrzej:** As we would define it. So they're actually talking about creating a full-blown game that the purpose of the game is to achieve a goal beyond entertainment. It's there to do something, be it, learn, learn a new skill, train somebody on something learn about geography, whatever it might be. Um, Whereas gamification has always been very much. We will take certain elements of games and we'll put them, or throw them at the wall and hopefully one of them will stick and you'll be engaged with it for a few seconds. That's how gamification seems to often be applied in, in whenever I see it in the world generally is kind [00:38:00] of, oh yeah, no, I threw, I throw a leaderboard on it.

It's gamified. And where we used to argue a lot was you would say, it's not gamification. That's just throwing a leaderboard on it and my view was always, no, it's still gamification. It's just not very good.

We still have to accept it because gamification steals all sorts of other ideas. You know, we, we talk about all sorts of things. Ah that's gamification and like 10 years ago, it wasn't gamification, but it is now cause we have a word for it. We steal all kinds of people's ideas. And I think what, I've, what I've sort of learned over the last few years now is. Making those distinctions is very useful for academic conversations. It's absolutely essential.

We have to have a language that when we speak to people who are in the industry, we know what we're talking about. So if you and I talk about a serious game, I know you're talking about a full fledged game. It looks like a game. It feels like a game. Everything about it is the same as a game, except for it wasn't built to entertain [00:39:00] specifically.

It was learned to achieve a goal beyond entertainment. Whereas if you talk about gamification in my mind, I'm seeing our nightmares, especially when you talk about gamification, where w you know where we were going, oh, this is, this is, this is somebody put badges on their website. And when they, when somebody views an article, the badge, and whether you viewed two articles that get three points in a second batch, And I think this is a problem, you know, if that's how we think, that's just imagine how bad it is when somebody else who doesn't understand it, they either go, oh, I know what gamification is.

It's when you give me points for doing the things that you want me to do. And you're like, oh, that's not quite what I'm trying to do. Or it's oh, you're gonna, you're gonna make call of duty. What?

We've both had these conversations with people, you know, we've had the conversations. Oh, I remember seeing in a comment in a meeting one day and they'll talking about like Red Dead Redemption.

And I said, do you know? That was like years and years of development [00:40:00] with thousands of people working on it and millions of pounds. What's your budget? 10,000 pounds. You're not getting Red Dead Redemption.

I think then that's the flip side is that, you know, the gamification yeah. You're going to be call of duty out of my spreadsheet. No, no, I'm not, you know, I think it's so difficult because we argue about it internally in the industry about what's what and what, what should shouldn't shouldn't be the outside world doesn't care.

They just see gamification there's this umbrella of anything that looks a bit like a game that isn't being used on your X-Box is gamification. But if it's on your X-Box, it's a game. And I think what I've come to the realization is I'm going to stop fighting them. They want to say that that's fine. Yeah.

That's exactly what is absolutely sign on the dotted line. Not quite as bad, but you know, it's that kind of okay. Yes. But at the same [00:41:00] time, very much, no, let's sit down and have a chat because I'm tired of fighting this uphill battle of no, that's not gamification you'll wrong because clients aren't wrong. Clients are always right. We know that. Um, And we, we, we just fall into this trap of. Forgetting the, no one cares except for us, it's kind of the industry cares, but no one outside the industry cares who's gamification serious games or whatever. They just want to make money or solve a problem with some description.

And I think it was, it was a light bulb moment a while back where I just thought, yeah, you're fighting for

the sake of fighting sometimes.

**Roman:** Yeah, I think you're right. And at the same time, I think um, it's, it's it's wrong the point is um, so I, I totally agree. I'm tired of fighting about that, but at the same time I have this, this urge of trying to clarify things [00:42:00] up and the point is that. I think, look, I do this now for almost 12 years. Okay. It was a, for almost 12 years, I have customers calling me companies and saying, Hey, we need gamification and you have no clue what they are talking about or what they are thinking. I bet most more than 50% of these people they just about, Hey, at the end, I have a, I can put my VR glasses on.

Okay. So, and the point is me as a business provider on this, I it's it's, it costs me time and efforts to go to these clients just to realize, Hey, they are just want to have a great looking PR project. And why are they calling me? Because they have fallen? No, they, they are calling me correctly because they looked at, what is written about gamification [00:43:00] and what's written, what is written about gamification is just this superficial stuff that you can call pixels. What about pictures that are pixels on the screen? Okay, so it's just about this. Okay. You have avatar. Oh yeah. There are points and bad. And so and so that's the crazy stuff.

And so I, I always hoped that if we can clarify things here, we could, we could position the industry perhaps then we don't call it gamification anymore. And perhaps I'm, I'm, I'm not some suddenly it's more like, I don't know. It's more like, Hey, he's in behavior economics. And he wants to do it in a playful way, whatever it is.

I don't know. But the point is I want to by arguing with the industry about it. I just wanted to save perhaps the industry, but of course, mainly myself. The time and effort always to find out what the customer was with the customer, what he really wants, because and [00:44:00] this that's the point right now until today.

I mean, you already said it now. It's it's about, we started about talking about that stuff 10 years ago or whatever and app to now the, the, the mass of people out there, when they're talking about gamification, when they are thinking about their gamification, they only can remember that they have read something with, oh, I'm being rewarded with points.

And from my, from my perspective, of course, that's a very personal one. That's in my honest opinion, that's the opposite of it. Okay. Because no one ever was motivated to play a game that he wasn't motivated before. Because the game provides points so points. And so, how to say that the, the basic conception about what are we talking about when we're talking about gamification is it's already different because in, in their point of [00:45:00] view, they think humans are lazy, they want to be, they want to win, and they want to have it easy. And if that's the case, if you think that's the case, how people are motivated to do something, to make it easy, to reward them and to let them win, you have, from my point of view. And I think we can, I can also prove with that by looking at evolutionary biology and whatever.

So deep really is facts. Um, From my point of view, let's uh, image of man, that's just not true. And if you go to the people and tell them, okay, what are you doing? Or as a sport or as a whatever. And they tell you, Hey, I like to climb on mountains or Hey, if they, my hobby is building airplanes, so models or whatever they come up with, you can always tell them that no one does it for the points afterwards, they enjoy the activity itself.

And if you [00:46:00] define the activity in a deeper way, you come up with, okay, it's always easy to get started hard to master. It's always about being challenged, challenged over time. It's about being of our progress. It's about, you're more often failing than you're winning, so you don't get the points and it's still engaging.

And , again, I got, I got into a rant, sorry. I lost. And so this is my, I always try to argue within the industry, but because how can the mass out there, the people out there who of course are not doing that daily on a daily base? How can they know what they really want when they are talking about gamification? If 98% of the gamification industry is talking about persuasion instead of motivating.

**Andrzej:** So I think an interesting topic for another conversation is going to be how the exact opposite, the opposite [00:47:00] of that is also true sometimes now um, I see some of the stuff, my kids. And I wonder where evolution's heading. I just have to point you at games like cookie, cookie clicker, cow clicker uh, Ian Bogost's, famous, failed experiments in proving that people want more than just clicking on something.

I think that there are, there are lots of examples out there of how the opposite happens far too much. And I wonder if it's because we're almost reprogramming, I don't know, is, is there a generation being reprogrammed to, to get the sort of rewards for minimum efforts? I do worry about that with, with my own kids sometimes as well, you know, there's this.

I play a game. Now, you know, you walk into the game and things flash up and going, Hey, you walked into the screen and you've got this as a badge flies up. And I upgraded my armour for touching something. And, you know, I, [00:48:00] when I was a kid, I had to work for this stuff, you know, I didn't have save points. I had to play the game from start to finish.

It was a six hour sit down without the toilet because I wanted to get to the end of the Mario, because if it crashed or I didn't, I died three times. I had to start from the beginning. Now, you know, there's unlimited saves and rewinds and this, that, and the other, and you can pay money to get your add on that makes it easier.

And I think, I think some of the stuff that we're going to talk about over the, over the coming podcast is going to be really focused on, on how we want all of what you've just said to be absolutely true. And I think it should be, but there's definitely. That there is this sort of underlying current of stuff where people will just do things for awards absolutely far too often.

In fact, you know, you look at maybe not for long periods of time, don't get me wrong. I'm not talking about long-term engagement, but the things that people will do for that short term reward sometimes startles me now, even got me [00:49:00] running once. And that was, that was silly. But you know, I, I joined, I joined a local leader board of friends on uh, on FitBit.

Hated every second of it, but, you know, I got my steps up and then I realized that I, I, this is, you know, as a gamification expert, knowing exactly what was happening. And I, I actually have to catch myself and go, no, you're doing this the wrong reason. You should be doing it because you're overweight and fat.

But no, what you're doing is because you want to be on the leaderboard against your friends and you,

do you still feel, I still find myself being caught out by this same trap over and over again. And, and the, and this is again, I think is part of why coming back to the definitions thing, it's part of why I started to reevaluate things like fun within talking about gamification, because I'd realize a lot of what I'd done over the years, wasn't fun. It was technically correct. And it did what it was meant to do. And a byproduct of that is that people found it engaging [00:50:00] and entertaining. I hadn't built it to be fun. I'd built it to be functional and to achieve that business goal. And I think I, I kind of, I had almost tidied up. I smoothed off my rough edges too much and tried to become too, too streamlined in my approach of, I will just make it work and it will do the thing it's meant to do.

And people will do better because of this, whatever it is going through our methods and then kind of step back and go that's dull. That really isn't much fun. Actually. There's not, you know, I've created a storyline that says the bare minimum of a storyline, the bare bones of what stories should feel like.

And I think I was kind of, I actually sat back and just went, no, you've, you've almost betrayed your own books and theories here by just making stuff that works, but it doesn't have joy in it. And I think that's where I was. Uh, Probably not a bad place for us to sort of start thinking about finishing, talking to today, but you [00:51:00] mentioned it right, right at the beginning, joy, how do we bring joy to an experience?

And I think people get, get confused by joy because they think that joy is people jumping up and down and sort of dancing around the room and, and screaming with excitement. And, okay. So first gamification talks you saw, I can guarantee you, I'm guilty of this. I still use these slides. You saw that the PS One adverts with pictures of people's faces whilst playing video games, you know, on the black background with the face or screwed up or the face all excited. Yeah. And that was what was being shown to us as this is what gamification will do to you. If you use gamification in your time sheets, in Salesforce. When someone puts in their time sheet, they will, they will make this face of pure joy and excitement. And everyone's like, oh my God. That's [00:52:00] bollocks. No I'm not, why would I, the only way I'm going to get excited about putting the time into my time sheet is if at the end of it, you give me a holiday for doing it.

But if you just at least make it only to gamify that process, we just make it easy to do, you know, the reason that we're using gamification and hoping for this is because the systems are so complicated, you needed to be a rocket scientist to put your days in. Oh, we'll use gamification and we'll make points. And I'll make sounds as you put things into like, no, just make it one click and I can do it from a phone rather than making me log in through single sign on through authenticator. Blood samples, give them my inside leg measurement, then work through 15 different screens just to put in I did one hour on this project.

What's, it's going to be easier, make that simpler or make it into a game. Let me think. But that was the thing. People were like, we'll use games. That's how we'll fix that problem. And they, and it was, it was just sort of, you saw this, [00:53:00] this sort of stream of people who think that gamification is going to generate the same joy and it's all the same levels of excitement that playing an actual multimillion dollar video games is going to give someone and it's bringing them back down to earth and say, look, I hate to say it, but yeah, it will make it more interesting and I can certainly make people smile.

**Roman:** I totally agree. So the, the thing is, and what makes it easy for me, I think so to, to, to explain to my customers and get with them on, on, on line as that I say what we want to achieve at the end that someone is doing something for the sake of doing it. This is joy. Okay. If you do, from my point of



view, if you do something for the sake of doing it. So the point is to convince you to pursue it, you that, okay, we now have this activity. Progress is shitty, but you get something afterwards or you win against someone else. You do, you didn't solve the problem, it's still shitty. You just put something in your purse, you persuaded. And and when [00:54:00] we, when I think when we think this way we realize, oh then of course, I think about, okay, what are the activities that human beings are doing just for the sake of doing it? And then you come up with, okay, it's sports.

If you really enjoy the sport. Of course, sometimes I say, okay, I have to do sport just to get a little bit lighter. Um, But um, or if you, but if you play games or if you do your hobby, you always do it for the sake of doing it. And so then we can look at it. Okay. And see how are these kinds of activities structured?

And then you see that, okay, these and this is, I think they have something in common. There's something that has a least common denominator and what you can. And that con that unifies all of these activities that we are doing for the sake of doing them. And this is what we can, how we can create a structure out of it and transform it into something else, so I was on tour business or software or whatever, and what you don't find [00:55:00] this least common denominator is everything that you can see on the screen. Yeah. So everything that is a pixel is not the stuff that unifies all these sports games and hobbies. And it's more like system thinking for me. And, from my point of view, for example, say, as soon as you think it's a game we have already fucked up.

So it doesn't work as, or, and this is why I said it's contextual design for me. It's how I create a long term. And this is also why I think it's not possible to gamify something in the short term. It can make something enjoyable in the short term that you say, okay, I want to do that. But if you don't experience it a little bit over time, you can't say that you're doing it for the sake of doing it.

Um, From my point of view. And and, and, and this is from my, I think where differentiates, how, how I see gamification [00:56:00] and how I, for example, see a goods, let's say user experience design or UI design. So I, I really resonate with what you said when it comes to, okay, how can we make Excel or spreadsheets more interesting or whatever.

And, and, and you're totally right, but the point is not, not bad. And the point is I am, I l'm, I am a huge fan. And I think this guy should be, it should be obligatory for every gamification designer to read his stuff. And visits. Normally I say, never start with people from the game design industry or gamification, and it's true.

Start with behavioral psychology, but this guy is, is, is it's amazing. And you know, him is Raph Koster. And I think a theory of fun is one of the, the is for my understanding how I see gamification or how someone can start to learn about, okay, what does fun and playing a game? What does it happen to the user?

So what happens with the user when he's involved in [00:57:00] that kind of stuff? And he once said that UX designers want to get rid of problems and systems, gamification designers or game designers want to create problems. And so-so, I would, I would say because most of the people get problems wrong. How you think about it?

So I would say he's he's he thinks more about challenges because a game is nothing else. It's a voluntarily try to overcome unnecessary obstacles and

**Andrzej:** Bernard suits.

**Roman:** Exactly. I always forget his name. Um, That's amazing. And that's so true. And it's also true for, for, on your hobby and for doing sports and whatever, if you really, and I think it's true for everything, for really everything that you're doing for the sake of doing it.

And because that's the point. And then of course, we can talk about all the models. I think it all falls together. And with that kind of logic, it helps that [00:58:00] suddenly it makes sense with the flow, how this works, the model for Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi how it combines or connects with the hook model of Nir Eyal or with a behavior model of BJ Fogg.

From my point of view, it makes all sense also with the self determinations theory that it seems to be that human beings like to enjoy activities for the sake of doing them. If these activities are made like a journey. So where it says that if you have achieved something, Hey, Congrats, So now you can go one step further and the next challenge will be harder a little bit.

And at the same time, it's that that our brain wants to achieve progress, wants to realize progress. And this, it only does it, if it was worth putting your time into it, to finally overcome a challenge and obstacle. So it's not about winning it's about progress now. It's not about being rewarded.

It's about being challenged. And if you look at this [00:59:00] from this point of view, I think it already makes sense that if. So if someone says, Hey, this shitty activity or less activity that has to be done, like it has to be done, like put the numbers into the spreadsheet and spreadsheet and we can't change it.

It has to be this way. And it's not about you finding out the right way. Okay. Games are not a to-do list. They are always, it's all in games. It's always about, you have to find out how to solve it and it not, we are telling you how to do it and you then do it. And so if you, if you think about this way, I think it pro comes pretty easy.

So especially as well, let's say at least for my individual point of view, it's not objectively. Yeah. But suddenly you realize that, okay. Do we have activities that have to be done in a certain way, and you can change the way. So it's like a repetitive monotone activity. Then we have to use extrinsic rewards because we can't change the [01:00:00] context itself to make the activity itself engaging.

But perhaps we can put a layer on top of it. I don't like that, but that's the solution for that. But as soon as it's more about, let's say a cognitive activity where it's about you putting your cognitive power into place and you can become better in solving the problem, because it's not all with the same way.

It's not a production line where you have to do all with the same stuff in a repetitive way. It's more about how to solve it. So like in innovation and in changing environments and so where you have to adapt to it. So it's about your cognitive. Cognitive performance when it's this case, then we can design that kind of context in a way that resolves much more with a, let's say basic rules, like, okay, games are easy to get started, how to master.

It's always about progress, but you want to fail. You want to see that you didn't get it right, but only if you realize [01:01:00] that, then you enjoy the progress at the end because you realize that you became better in something and games are from my point of view, nothing else as a evolutionary tool to get as humans in a situation to be eager for learning, because that of course increases the probability to survive, to adapt, to changes, and then to be able to. Um, Yeah, exactly.

**Andrzej:** No, I like, I like that. I think this is a really good place to kind of, to wrap up because,

**Roman:** oh yeah.

**Andrzej:** What you're saying there about first of all, you know, games, essentially, I can't remember it now, but they're learning machines. You know, you, you, they encourage you to do things that on the surface are boring, but they do it in a way that makes you interested in doing it again and again and again, and failing and getting back up and redoing it.

But the other thing was just thought it was a really good place to, to, to finish this. Cause I think it's going to [01:02:00] resonate with listeners an hour and something into this podcast. Was it worth it? If one of the things you said there was, you know, if the activity is worthwhile and I think one of our jobs sometimes as gamification designers is to, is to explain.

Preferably to the people building something, but sometimes we also have to do it to the people who are involved in learning from it or using it is why is this worth doing? And I think, you know, if at the end of going through, I've been through so many systems that are gamified and at the end of it, you're just like, what was the point?

Was there any of what you added, did any of that bring anything to this experience, the elevated any way whatsoever? What was it worth putting all that effort into adding silly little things that essentially were sort of almost nods to games, but didn't actually add anything, not even a [01:03:00] little bit of a laugh or a bit of joy, but probably spent weeks building it.

Was it worthwhile? And if the answer's no, then everyone's failed at their jobs. So I think. Yeah. I think like going to finish off is, is to kind of leave people with that thought of whatever you're doing. Is it worthwhile is what you're doing worthwhile in some way. And I think that's a fairly, that's actually a fairly broad philosophical question as well that could send people somewhere, but you know, it's what you're doing today worthwhile.

I don't know. But I think, yeah, that's a good place to go.

**Roman:** Yeah.

**Andrzej:** At the end of this hour and something podcast, if you felt it was worthwhile, we will be doing many more of these, hopefully, which will be slightly more structured in the future. We just wanted to

get a, get a feel for how, how we've evolved over the last few years, speaking to each other, we're going to be taking on topics such as how are some of the modern games that we're seeing these days, like Wordle and things like that.

How, how can we learn from those? We're going to look at how [01:04:00] we might tackle problems that we've seen. Day-to-day like maybe how would we have tackled things like. The education around COVID I might as well go straight into the important topics. Any ideas you guys might have out there of things you might want to hear us argue about or discuss like grumpy old men, please do let us know all one listener um, you know who you are and um, yeah, I think Roman until we can get ourselves back on the microphones again, I think we should say goodbye.

**Roman:** Yeah,

Andrzej. It was definitely worthwhile my time here. I'm sitting down in the evening and talking to you. I really enjoyed I'm. I'm looking forward to to all the other podcasts that are there that are there to come. And it's great to have you back really. I really appreciate,

**Andrzej:** I'm very happy to be back in the world of gamification a little bit more than that than I have been over the last couple of years.

It's it's, it's good to be back as the industry. Oh, thank you. I miss the industry. [01:05:00] Aw, what a lovely way to end.

Okay guys, until next time I am Andrzej

**Roman:** I'm Roman

**Andrzej:** and we will see you again soon. Cheers.

**Roman:** Cheers.

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