



Mario as a Metaphor for your Career

Description

When you consider your career, unless you are a games developer, I am pretty sure Mario does not enter your thoughts all that much. However, this game (as with almost all other games really) can teach us a lot about how we can plan our careers and how businesses really need to reconsider how they handle the careers of its employees. This is not so much gamification as it is learning from games.

Games offer players a lot of different mechanisms to understand where they are in the game, where they are going and how they are doing. All of this information is available at a glance, never more than one button press away if it is not on-screen already.

Let's take a look at just a few elements of New Super Mario on the Wii U. Other than your lives and the number of power ups and coins, you have so much available on the screen at any one time that gives you both immediate and long-term information and feedback.



1. The score is instant feedback on your overall progress through the game. The higher the score, the better you are doing. In your career this can be looked at as your place in the company. You know here that as the score increases so does your ability, most likely the challenge and in some games moving up a level – or at least getting a bonus.
2. The time in Mario is a deadline, how long he has to complete the level. We always have a deadline in our day-to-day lives. So some are long-term, others are just how long you have to answer an email. It all just depends how close it is.
3. The Goombas can be looked at as issues and obstacles in your job. Sometimes you can avoid or circumvent them. Other times you just have to jump on their heads!
4. The power ups can be looked at as optional but desirable activities within your role. You may not have to do certain internal course, but it can be of great benefit to do them!

It is also worth considering the player's or the employee's journey. In any one screen it is easy to know where you are going, get from the left to the right. Mix that knowledge with all of this instant feedback and you have a fantastic snapshot of your current situation and your immediate future. However, in Mario more long-term information is available at the press of a button in the form of the world map



At a glance you can see all of the options for your journey. You can see where you have been, but also where you can go from there. There are some options, some routes are harder than others and some you have to take like it or not.

How often in your work life can you say that you have a clear vision of where you will be in a years time, 5 years time, 10 years time? In most games, the knowledge of where you are heading is as key as knowing where you are now and what happens next.

How would you keep a player engaged if they never had any measure of success, or had to wait until they had completed the first 12 months of gameplay before they had a progress update? How would the gamer feel if they had no idea WHY they were doing what they are doing other than because they are told to?

Boss battles in games like this, in Mario's case against Bowser, can be seen as the final hurdle before the next level – your next promotion or even job. It is the culmination of all of the skills you have learned so far and your ability to apply them at just the right time to move on to your next opportunity.

This is all a nice metaphor for how you could view a career path – I explored this idea a while back in my [Flow and Player Journey](#) article. Working with employees to plan their future, breaking down their goals to small immediate goals and more long term goals as well as giving them regular feedback, is going to be a much better way to keep them engaged and motivated than the more “traditional” methods.

Category

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Tags

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Author

andrzej-marczewski

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