



The Original Gamified Social Networks – History Teaches us about Gamification

Description

Seeing the news that [Badgeville was to gamify social networks](#) got me thinking about the old days. Social networks are nothing new. Back in “the day”, we all used to use forums (and bulletin boards before that) and chat rooms to be social online. Forums tended to focus on specific topics, with chat rooms just a real time free for all. What got me thinking though was realising that a lot of these used to include elements of Gamification, forums especially.

There was this stuff called kudos or Kama. When you said something of interest or that was helpful, users could reward you with these – a bit like when someone likes you on Facebook or +1 ‘s you on Google+. Kama and time served would also very often go towards some sort of rank on the forum. Higher rank and Kama signified a user you could trust and who was useful or interesting on the forums.

The key factor here was that users were not adding content to get rank or Kama. These came to display recognition of contribution. The users created the content because they wanted to. They wanted to help or be interesting – ,altruism. Chat rooms would often take this a step further, with extra features being given to users who had been contributing over set time periods – levelling up so to speak.

With luck this is all sounding a little familiar. Experience points, rank / recognition badges, levels, altruism and community.

These are all tools from the Gamification arsenal we speak of so often. Forums and chat rooms used (and still use) all of these to great effect. Points and badges are used to recognise not incentivize. Levels are used to introduce features over time. Community is used to encourage and built to keep users engaged.

The future is often just a reinvention of the past. In the case of Facebook and Twitter it is a reinvention of the forum and chat room idea given a vast global scale. Looking back at ideas that worked and that may share some of the ideas of newer inventions can often lead to great results. Remember, Gamification is just a word, a collection of ideas and techniques pulled together under one umbrella. Whilst this may have lead to greater understanding of the psychology of these ideas, we have still been using most of them for many years!

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