



## Learning from the Dark Side of the Gig Economy: Unraveling Incentives and Behavioral Challenges

### Description

We've all been there. You stop at traffic lights, and a frenzied delivery cyclist swiftly zips in front, ignoring the light. Perhaps you're at KFC, jostled by a swarm of Deliveroo and Uber Eats drivers, all clamouring and gesturing at order numbers on their phones. Or maybe you find yourself unable to access your driveway because a colossal white van obstructs it, while an Amazon delivery person leaves £300 worth of electrical goods on your neighbour's doorstep in the pouring rain.

Whatever your story, you've likely fallen victim to the gig economy and how it incentivises undesirable behaviours.

### How does this relate to gamification?

It's easy to point fingers at the drivers, but they are just as much victims. Their earnings depend on meeting tight and often poorly compensated goals. More deliveries equals more money; that's the crux of the system. While gamification experts may argue that such incentivization has evolved into good narratives, the truth is that elements like badging, reward systems, and leaderboards remain as prevalent as ever.

If you were to look up gamification on Wikipedia (not recommended due to a poorly written page), the first things mentioned under "Game design elements" reveal that this is nothing new!

I mean, why have we bothered all these years?

Putting that aside, the key issue is that when significant to the user, incentives can drive negative behaviours to attain them. This phenomenon is termed the [Overjustification Effect](#), where the reward becomes more crucial than the activity itself.

But how does this apply when the reward is the very point of the activity? We often discuss the Overjustification Effect concerning scenarios like "Children drew better pictures when doing it for fun

vs. being paid.” That’s great, but a delivery driver isn’t delivering parcels for fun; they’re doing it solely for financial incentives. If more deliveries equal more money, they might resort to inconsiderate parking, breaking traffic rules, illegal parking, or hastily leaving parcels without knocking – anything to shave off a few seconds from their delivery times.

## How can we combat this?

The first step is to establish clear rules. Clearly outline what is expected from your workforce. Without explicit expectations, complaints about rule-breaking lack merit. It’s astonishing how often people gripe about rule violations without presenting the rules in plain English or at all.

The second step is obvious: reward fairly and set [achievable](#), sensible goals without driving negative behaviours. Instead of “More Deliveries = More Money,” shift to “Complete this number of deliveries within a reasonable time, and you will be compensated per hour to achieve them.” This way, drivers won’t feel the need to break rules or act inconsiderately to meet their goals.

Finally, penalize negative behaviours. The prerequisite for this is having the first step in place. If everyone agrees on fair rewards and sensible goals, punishing negative behaviours becomes reasonable, as there should no longer be a need for them.

### Category

1. Education
2. Gamification

### Tags

1. goals
2. incentives
3. overjustification effect

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