



Gamification is sh1t. Let's make it better.

Description

I thought that might get your attention. Excuse the contrived use of the 1 in shit there as well, firewalls can be so jumpy about certain words.

Now back to my point.

Gamification, in far too many cases right now, is indeed shit. **I am not saying gamification itself is bad**, just a lot of the uses and applications of gamification that we are seeing out there falls into that particularly odorous category.

It's as if gamification has become the duct tape of user design. "The user experience is a bit off, what should we do? Add gamification". "The system is not great, people get stuck and don't like using it, what should we do? Add gamification – points and badges will fix it!". "We need to improve efficiency in the department. How can we do that? A leaderboard you say? Let's do it!"

Rather than using gamification as part of the overall design, to help enrich the user journey and experience, it is used to patch bad design – making it ultimately worse. Gamification is not a solution looking for a problem, it is a way of thinking and designing that puts the user at the centre of the experience. If it is not done this way it will fail and fail in terrible ways!

We can make this better and here are a few ways you can start.

Think RAMP.

1. Give people the chance to work together – relatedness. Make them feel part of something. Collaboration should be your first thought, not competition. Use the technologies available to connect people beyond their usual working set – there is no such thing as a global boundary these days.
2. Give them autonomy, freedom to make mistakes and to find the best way for them to work. Your way is not their way and your game is not their game! Celebrate differences as given some time and some freedom, you may find others have much better ideas than you. Don't be afraid to loosen the reigns a little.

3. What ever gamification you decide to use, make sure that it gives people a real sense that their achievements mean something. I don't mean achievements like trophies, I mean real achievements. Celebrate new products, innovative ideas, academic achievement, losing weight, running an extra mile. Make them feel that these achievements meant something to you as much as it meant something to them.
4. What ever you are trying to achieve with your system, think about why the user would be interested – what is their purpose within it. Every machine runs because every part does its job efficiently and effectively – no matter how small. Give everyone a sense of where they fit and how important they are to the overall success. Give them an idea of what they are working towards and milestones to help the gauge how close they are.
5. If you have to use rewards or incentives (and really you should not have to), make them relevant and in line with the task and the people. An iPad may be a nice prize for a member of your team, not too expensive, but something they may want. However, if you are looking at a more global group – an iPad could be much more valuable to people in some countries than others. If the prize is too big in comparison to the task, people will game the system to get it. Remember over justification – you want people doing something because they want to do well at it – not just because they want the prize.
6. Make it clear how success is measured and fed back to the users. There is nothing worse than suddenly finding you had achieved something, but have no idea how you did it. Actually, there is one thing worse – finding someone has achieved something you think you should have achieved and having no idea how they did it or how the scoring worked!
7. It's not about fun and games. Don't just think **you** can add what you think is fun or build what **you** think is a game and it will suddenly solve all of your engagement issues. Test things with your potential users and hire people or companies that know what they are doing. Unless you are an expert in gamification or you have the flexibility to fail – let the experts do it.
8. Finally and most importantly – honesty and transparency. You are trying to make things better. Clouding your purpose and trying to trick people into doing things is not the right way and is destined to fail.

Don't prove the haters right. gamification is not a bullshit concept – it is great but needs to mature and be treated with care.

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