



Gamification: Why Aren't Badges Enough?

Description

Recently I wrote a piece about the fact there was more to [gamification than just trophies](#), but I never really explained why. A few people have asked, so I thought I would have a go at explaining.

Just Because You Build It, Doesn't Mean They Will Come

The first reason is simple, but one that I never really thought of until I started using them on my site. For trophies and the like to actually start to work – you need the people you wish to keep **engaged** to actually be registered with you. When you are in a company and are using it on an intranet, that is simple, as they all have to be registered to use it. However, when you are trying to use it on your website or blog, it is not quite the same. Very few people will register just for the chance to earn badges on your site! So here it goes back to the same old thing, content. If the content is good and there is some reason to join (comments, ability to add reviews, competitions etc.) then you can use badges to help to keep people engaged. On [Yet Another Review Site](#) I use them to encourage a little competitions between the editors and the reviewers. Experience points, badges and public monthly leader boards are all used to help encourage them to do more on the site.

Keep It Interesting, Keep It Real

Another major reason that badges are not always enough on their own is interest. Whilst people do like to collect things, real work is still real work. The prospect of a badge that says they have written 100 reports will not be as appealing as the one for 10 reports was. You also have to make sure that there are enough badges. The worst thing that can happen with a system like that is hitting a point where there is nothing left to collect.

A Dry Well Provides No Engagement

Too much too soon can be a big issue when collecting trophies and badges. Normally when you register, you will get some kind of badge to get you going. Then you get one for your first bit of work.

Then maybe another for getting a review or a comment. Then you may get one or two more in rapid succession for doing other things. Soon you have collected five or six in no time at all. Then it dries up. The next award is not going to be given too you (if you are told at all what the criteria is) until you have submitted another 20 reviews. This dry spell could be a killer to any system like this.

Who Cares? Not I

Finally, and this is a pretty big one, not everyone cares about badges and trophies. I don't for instance. When I play games on the Xbox or the PS3, I couldn't care less that I have got the "Jumped for a million feet and survived" trophy. I want the game to be good. The same is true of websites or intranets. Personally, I want good content. I also want to be guided to other good content (see [Gamification: You may already be using it](#)).

Blended Approach

Gamification is all about using the right approaches for your intended audience. It maybe they are captive, in the case of an Intranet. You may be trying to entice them to register. You may have a million visitors but no loyalty. It is unlikely that any one mechanic / technique will cover your needs. Experiment, test and gather feedback to work out the most effective use of gamification for you.

Category

1. Gamification
2. Technology

Tags

1. andrzej marczewski
2. badges
3. engagement
4. game dynamics
5. game mechanics
6. game theory
7. Gamification
8. motivation
9. trophies
10. video games
11. yet another review site

Date Created

11/04/2012

Author

andrzej-marczewski