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Article

Blasting Fun with Gamification in Corporate Training

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Abstract: Gamification is the use of game mechanics in non-game situations. It is a solution to which businesses are turning more and more, since, among other things, it also responds to the individual's need for fun. What are the prevailing trends and to what extent can it be exploited in the period we are going through? This paper tries to contribute to a better understanding of gamification with main aim to help employees in their work, and businesses to achieve goals and be more competitive.

Keywords: gamification technologies; gamification in corporate training; gamified learning

Introduction

Gamification is the use of game mechanics in non-game situations (Detering, 2015). It is a solution to which businesses are turning more and more, since, among other things, it also responds to the individual's need for fun. What are the prevailing trends and to what extent can it be exploited in the period we are going through?

Developmental psychology is the branch of psychology that studies the stages of human development (Butterworth, 2014). One of the main points where developmental psychology emphasizes is the gameplay. Gameplay is the means by which knowledge and skills are acquired, while, at the same time, it fulfills a vital and effortless need for fun. However, the above does not only apply to the first years of life, since a person never disengages from play, he/she simply modifies it according to his/her age and interests.

Background

Gamification refers to the application of a series of game elements and mechanisms in various processes and environments with the aim of giving additional motivation to the participants as well as "*seeing with a different eye*" certain difficult tasks. Simply put, by leveraging gamification, tasks that are considered boring can be turned into fun, through points, badges, virtual characters, leaderboards, etc. Thus, employees are motivated and dedicated to a much greater degree in the fulfillment of the respective goal, but also show a greater willingness to repeat their work.

Although it is widely used, gamification is viewed with considerable skepticism by some companies, mainly due to the cost involved. So why would a company choose to gamify some of its processes? Some of the reasons are that it offers (Blohm & Leimeister, 2013; Egloffstein & Ifenthaler, 2016; Antonaci et al., 2018):

- **More Motivation:** Gamification helps create a pleasant and "fun" atmosphere, increasing motivation and productivity, while elements of competition push employees to give 100% in order to fulfill the psychological need for success, recognition and self-esteem.
- **Greater Employee Engagement:** Due to its playful and fun nature, employees show excellent participation consistency, thus greater engagement in the goals of the program and, ultimately, the company.
- **Better performance management:** Thanks to badges, points, rankings, etc., gamification helps to recognize the efforts of employees, as well as to keep track of the achievement of the goals set, while allowing performance evaluation both between them as well as in terms of the desired result.

- **More efficient time management:** Either directly, due to the specifications applied by the program itself, or indirectly, through greater motivation and willingness, gamification helps employees manage their time better, and thus be more efficient.
- **Takes learning to the next level:** Through gamification, employees not only learn in a fun way, but above all, carry out the training at their own pace, thus not only increasing the degree of assimilation of new knowledge and capabilities, but and the possibility of their application in working life.

Method

Gamification has already marked a significant path in modern business, having been introduced and utilized in many business functions and processes. Understandably, the Human Resources Department in every company could not remain unaffected, with gamification being utilized, for the most part, in the training and evaluation of the company's human resources. On the one hand, it is able to provide a significant amount of -mainly qualitative- information about individuals, and on the other hand, it can ensure greater validity, but also a positive experience for candidates, thus contributing to employer branding in the long term, while, regarding the training of the workers, offers the terpnon after the beneficial. However, adopting gamification can seem difficult and complicated for many companies. Therefore, in order for an organization to facilitate its organization and implementation, it would be advisable to take some simple steps:

- **Think long term:** Regardless of the area in which gamification will be applied, it is important to have a broader plan, since "*bad things don't take long to happen*". Given that some people are very competitive, any hasty moves can lead to opposite of the desired results. Therefore, the company must ensure that the program it implements meets the needs of its employees in order to find long-term implementation and success.
- **Don't exaggerate the rewards:** The most effective programs are those that are not based on big and impressive rewards, but on the competition itself. Besides, the existence of excessive rewards on the one hand creates the wrong incentives, with employees doing everything to win, and on the other hand, they greatly increase the cost of the whole process.
- **To ensure equal opportunities:** The success of the program requires that all participants know exactly the process followed, that is, they know how it works, what the goal is and how they can achieve it. This public disclosure helps ensure that everyone is able to participate, regardless of who the final winner is.
- **Don't just reward the "winner":** It would be appropriate to take into account, to some extent, the overall participation as gamification is directly related to the group. Clearly, the company must reward the "winner". However, it is vital that there is recognition for the other participants as well, otherwise there is a risk of losing their positive mood and motivation towards the process.
- **Be creative with rewards:** Typically, material and other types of rewards that are not directly related to the work context are not as effective. Rather, it is the rewards associated with professional recognition and advancement that drive results. Furthermore, such rewards strengthen the connection between the gamification program and the business as a whole, while having low and/or no cost.

Gamification can provide solutions in many areas of a business and provide significant benefits both for it and for its people (Blohm & Leimeister, 2013). However, in order to effectively utilize all its potential to the fullest, with the aim of the greatest possible profit from its application, every company must take into account the prevailing trends:

- **Utilization of Social Media and Mobile Apps:** The use of gamification through social media and mobile applications is an increasingly emerging practice, since it offers comfort and easy access. In addition, this practice also helps to increase the engagement of the participants, with many small businesses turning to the logic of *Bring Your Own Device*, i.e. mobilizing their employees to choose and bring the device they want, and which is easier for them to use.
- **Introduction of Virtual Reality:** The technological evolution that exists allows gamification to be over-themed with elements of Virtual Reality (VR) as well as Augmented Reality (AR), which enrich the experience provided, resulting in greater focus, motivation and will to succeed of the

players, while 360° technology is used for spherical visualization, thus also contributing to realism.

- **Personalization:** As in many other areas, in gamification there cannot be a universal, general solution that meets all needs without exception. Therefore, its application is shaped based not simply on the demands of the company, but on the "rhythms" and experience of the individuals. For example, a worker who is familiar not only with new technological achievements but also with modern video games is likely to be much more receptive to gamification. It is noted, of course, that Virtual Reality also helps with personalization.
- **Recording the results with qualitative criteria:** The recording and analysis of the results of each effort is one of the essential elements to the success of an organization and the same, of course, applies to gamification. Until recently, measuring and analyzing the success of gamification was quite complicated (Hassanzadeh, 2012) and was mainly based on quantitative data, such as the number of clicks, interactions, hours of use of the application, etc. However, due to the technological progress, there is the possibility for more qualitative approaches by recording, for example, the number of attempts, error rates, etc. In short, it is now possible for companies to set clear goals for gamification and analyze the success of gamification in many ways.
- **Focus on emotions and meaning:** The effort made mainly concerns the creation of an environment, which, among others, will allow the creation of emotions through the gamification process. This is because workers today are tired of excessive competition and are looking for something more. Therefore, gamification focuses, little by little, on creating an experience that not only helps to achieve a wider goal, but also on giving a more general meaning, while also contributing to an overall change in behavior and even attitude to life.
- **Voice function:** Various devices equipped with voice function are coming to the fore today at a rapid pace. This fact also directly affects gamification, which uses this technology to ensure a more direct interaction and feedback. Voice-only operation can also save time and simplify the whole process even more.

Outcomes

The recent coronavirus pandemic has clearly affected every aspect of everyday life, work and personal, creating a new reality regarding the way people work, educate, socialize and have fun. It's no coincidence that, according to research by App Annie ("App Annie" n.d.), in the second quarter of 2020 there were an average of 1 billion mobile game downloads per week, with more than \$19 billion spent on purchases through app stores. This fact can clearly be used by companies, who have to face the pandemic as an opportunity to integrate gamification into their strategy, which will give them a significant advantage over the competition. This happens because through gamification, employees will be able to fulfill their need for fun and entertainment in a constructive way (Kyewski, and Krämer, 2018; Triantafyllou, 2019), as they will be able to develop new skills, and on the other hand, to fight more effectively the anxiety and stress created by the new conditions imposed by Covid-19.

At the same time, the companies, through a gamification program they will implement, have the possibility on the one hand to train their employees "remotely" both in the new procedures that need to be implemented and for the acquisition of new "digital" and not only- skills, while at the same time they can maintain the motivation and engagement of their people, who, in the vast majority, now work from their own premises.

Gamification should in no way be treated as a panacea nor should it be incorporated into every company process without the required planning, which, in any case, may not allow for its cost. However, if implemented correctly, it is undoubtedly a useful tool for any organization, especially now that the coronavirus has forced a shift towards new technologies and a more digital environment. Therefore, Human Resources departments, reflecting on existing needs, could utilize gamification in several of their processes, such as recruiting and training, in order to achieve benefit for their people.

Gamification is a useful tool, especially now that the coronavirus has forced a shift to new technologies. Education takes on a new dimension with gamified learning, an innovative way that

combines the world of games with the learning process. Gamified learning uses the fundamentals of gaming, such as missions, scores, challenges, and rewards, to create a learning environment that is fun and engaging (Kapp, 2012; Kim et al., 2018). The aim is to encourage learners to participate, monitor their progress and develop new skills through gameplay. It works with:

- **Missions and Levels:** Learners take on "missions" that represent various courses or tasks. As they progress, they level up, get rewarded and face more advanced challenges.
- **Ratings and Awards:** Learners earn points for each success. There are awards and recognition for achievements and efforts.
- **Real Time Analytics:** Learners have the opportunity to learn with real data.
- **Social Networking:** Ability to cooperate and compete among many. Learners can see their progress compared to others.

The gamification of learning in the short term aims to increase the student's involvement with the teaching objects (Seaborn & Fels, 2015; Triantafyllou, 2022a), as well as to increase the degree of "student engagement" (EdGlorssary; Triantafyllou, 2022b; Triantafyllou, 2022c), while in the long term it is able to instill behaviors that will favor the acquisition of knowledge and correct social interactions (Furdu, I., Tomozei, C., & Köse, 2017; Yuan, 2017).

Gamification of learning differs from games for learning, as it enriches pre-existing educational activities with elements borrowed from them. Of course, this does not exclude the inclusion of so-called serious games in the whole experience, i.e. applications that are designed with a clear educational horizon (Triantafyllou & Sapounidis, 2023). An educational platform must have the characteristics of a gamified learning environment, include mechanisms for direct feedback to learners, point systems, leaderboards, awards, badges, progress bars and digital characters, while educational games could not be missing.

Discussion

To conclude, a well-designed gamified application can engage the user in a thoroughly entertaining environment and capture their loyalty. It is no coincidence that applications designed with gamification-based mechanisms are not easily abandoned by users. In any case, however, critical use should be made so that the receiver retains control of the handling.

Gamification is the use of game mechanics in non-game situations. In this way, the elements that govern the games are used, in order to immediately improve the user's experience and strengthen his/her interest, ultimately leading him/her to greater loyalty with the product.

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