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Innovation
Gamification Vision

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THE IDEA

Gamification is the use of game mechanics in non-game situations to drive user engagement and behaviour. The idea is to bring the successful concept of gaming to other areas of industry that can benefit from the tools that have made the gaming industry so successful.

This white paper looks into the background of gamification, and how companies could benefit from applying it to their business applications and processes to increase productivity, collaboration and ultimately, their profits.

Gamification vision

BACKGROUND

The concept of using game mechanics outside of gaming is not new. The health, education and marketing industries have been using them for years. Frequent flyer and supermarket loyalty schemes are strong examples of using points programmes to maintain customer commitment to a brand. In education the use of games to engage children in learning is long established, while the health industry, too, has utilised game mechanics to funnel human behaviour - from weight-loss point schemes to anti-smoking incentives.

Nintendo's Wii Fit and Rexbox's 'Epic Win' iPhone app are recent examples of companies successfully gamifying mundane tasks. The Wii Fit brought fun to exercise, while Epic Win is a task management app that rewards users when they complete their personal to-do lists. Game consoles and Smartphone applications are becoming ingrained in people's lives as consumers, and small businesses, seek to manage their lives through apps that can help boost productivity and enjoyment. In previous decades, applications were something that you only had exposure to at work – now they are freely available at the tap of a touch screen.

Why would gaming concepts be useful in business?

The core game mechanics are: progression, feedback and behavioural[1].

- **Behavioural:** providing the correct features to meet the needs of differing personality types.

- **Feedback:** enabling the user to learn from their actions.

- **Progression:** enabling the user to earn more as they progress.

These mechanics have the sole purpose of keeping users engaged for as long as possible. This has proved phenomenally successful in the games industry. In 2010, 500 million games were sold globally! The objective in business is the same – to keep both staff and customers engaged, and to make money in the process.

There appears to be a belief that exists in business that if you are playing and having fun then you are not working. However, with the global games industry worth £2.875bn[2] in 2010, and the first generation of gamers now well established in the business world, this perception is now more easily challenged. Those who were brought up on Atari, Sega and Nintendo are now running businesses across the world, and going home to their PlayStation®3 and XBox 360. Couple this with the explosion in smartphone apps and the apparently unlimited availability of free online games, it is difficult to argue that gaming is not an accepted part of everyday life.

OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunities available from this concept are very exciting. Any business application from business intelligence, CRM and accounting to service management and training can use gameplay to increase productivity, collaboration and innovation. Processes, too, can be molded around these ideas to make them more easily followed and embraced.

These elements can be gamified by introducing fun-based dynamics such as:

- Points and rewards

- Social interaction

- Levels

- Challenges

- Leader boards

- Story boards.

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[1] Gamification.org: Accessed on 23rd July 2011

[2] 360 Magazine – Issue 79

Points and rewards (incentives)

The use of incentives in gameplay is well founded, from gathering points in order to 'level up' in console games, to becoming the mayor of your local coffee shop in social gaming. Generally when the word incentive is used in commercial environments it means providing a financial reward. However, companies should not shy away from the term because of this as gaming has proved that the rewards do not have to be real to be powerful. Facebook's 'like' function is an example of a points system that doesn't have any value other than providing those who have created the 'liked' content with a sense of achievement.

Effective knowledge management (KM) is a problem in most organisations. There are often attempts at sharing knowledge, perhaps across central KM tools or localised workspaces, but generally they are updated by the same handful of people or left to fall into disrepair. What if sharing knowledge awarded you points? What if you could become a 'Master', 'King of...' or 'Expert' within an organisation or community just by sharing as much of your knowledge as possible? Online forums already use this approach to rate the users who participate in discussions. The more posts you have made, the higher your level and the more prestigious your position. In business you can objectivise your points collection as a way of boosting participation and helping employees to reach key milestones. Progression is easier when you have a clear goal and pre-defined steps on how to achieve it.

Social interaction (collaboration and leadership)

The rapid growth of social networking and online multiplayer gaming in the last decade has also led to a growth in business applications that seek to bring users together. Tools such as SharePoint and Office Communicator have become everyday applications used to share information and knowledge across global teams. However, this is an area which is still in its infancy.

If we take World of Warcraft (WoW) as an example of social collaboration we can perhaps look into the future of collaborative working across virtual teams. In WoW, teams of around 25-40 players meet at designated times, with designated leaders to take part in what are known as 'raids'. These generally involve taking on a 'boss' creature, or multiple 'bosses' and require teams to work as one to achieve the ultimate goal of eliminating the enemy. Team members have different skills and these skills are used to perform certain tasks in the raid. The people controlling their avatars are often thousands of miles apart and communicate via a headset. The challenges they have to overcome are difficult and involve much preparation and normally a considerable amount of on-the-fly creative problem solving. Business can learn a lot from such activities when we consider the growth in virtual teams and blended delivery. There are multiple ways of collaborating globally, from video conferencing to live meetings, the next step may be a seamless online presence as with online gaming where users can work on the exact same interface and be in constant communication via headsets.

Challenges and leader boards (productivity)

Confucius wrote "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." Game designer Jane McGonigal refers to this as 'Blissful Productivity'[3], a state that allows game players to spend hours every day immersed in solving a difficult task because they are enjoying it. This idea is cemented by the fact that WoW gamers have cumulatively spent more than 5.93 million years[4] solving virtual problems. Imagine if that kind of productivity could be brought to pass on business problems like winning more clients and cutting costs.

[3] Jane McGonigal. TED Speech. Gaming can make a better world. http://www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_gaming_can_make_a_better_world.html

[4] Jane McGonigal. TED Speech.

Tom Chatfield, author of Fun Inc,[5] writes "It's almost as if a video game is not only something that delivers fun... but also a device that trains people to work far harder than they otherwise would by turning work into a series of tangibly rewarded learning challenges." Indeed the use of difficult challenges within games encourages players to be creative in their solutions, while staying within the confines of the virtual world's rules. This is something that can be used in the real world to inspire users to think creatively about real-world issues.

Leader boards are well established within sales teams, schools and even the NHS. Utilising the competitive spirit that arises from people attempting to out-do their peers can drive productivity and achievement. Unlike previous decades where leader boards were anathema to some demographics, the era of social and online gaming has brought them in to the mainstream. The potential for this device in all areas of business is very high. Leader boards do not have to be social; applications could use them to allow users to compete against themselves, i.e. to beat their own high scores. Data entry is a prime example of where this tool can be used, as those entering the data can push themselves to get more and more information entered into the system in ever decreasing timescales.

Story boards (meaning)

Most people want to feel that they are a part of something bigger. Companies of all sizes have mission statements and values but it is often difficult to get all employees to buy in to them, especially for large scale organisations. Imagine if all business applications and processes were built around the story your company wants to tell.

Envisage an incident management tool that helps tell that story. Instead of the service desk picking up calls within SLAs and getting no feedback, they could receive messages that thank them for ensuring the company's commitment to good service is achieved. The

feedback loop is a powerful tool in developing meaning throughout an organisation, and meaning is a powerful tool in getting the most from people.

MAKING LIFE EASIER

As well as the aforementioned game mechanics, gaming concepts can also inspire usability improvements.

- Persistent environment
- Ease of use
- Customisation

Persistent environment

Gone are the days of having to play a game through to the end because you didn't want to lose your progress. Today's games, and even music players, DVDs and television, allow you to save as you go, or auto-save, and when you log back in you are immediately at the exact location you left from. Applications generally require users to return to the home screen and navigate back to their saved progress when they log back in. The ability to pick up where you left off is becoming the norm and enterprise applications need to consider this functionality as it saves users' time and, arguably, increases engagement with the product.

Ease of use

Players pay to play games, and developers work hard to curb the learning curve so that players start enjoying the game immediately without realising they are learning. The games then gradually introduce more advanced techniques as the player progresses further. Conversely, business applications often require training, which not only makes them daunting to the user, but also means they are more expensive to implement. Focusing on ease of use, no matter how complex the application, is essential. After all, business applications will struggle to be as complex as Street Fighter's Ryu's Shoreyuken Ultra combo move.

[5] Tom Chatfield, Fun Inc: Why games are the 21st Century's most serious business. Virgin Books (6 Jan 2011)

Customisation

Customisation is the buzz word in gaming, social networking and smartphone apps. The ability to mould a Facebook page or gaming avatar to mirror user personality is now a mandatory feature. Physical products, too, from golf shoes to iPhone cases are all customisable, allowing their owners to express themselves freely. Users of applications are more likely to enjoy using an application if they can make it in their own image. Enterprise applications of the future should allow user customisation features as it will encourage users to spend time with the tool, but also because it is becoming an expected attribute.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

You can gamify anything. However, this does not mean that everything should be gamified. There can be negatives as well as positives. For example, leader boards and incentivised point schemes can encourage disharmony and even cheating amongst users. While arbitrarily making an application game-like can confuse users and cause disengagement. It is imperative that thorough analysis is performed before considering the gamification of a project.

However, even when it might be agreed that a project should not use game mechanics, we should understand that we don't have to turn everything into a game to make use of gaming concepts. Aesthetics,

for example, can be used to make applications and processes more engaging. Business applications are still generally uninspiring in appearance, with a heavy reliance on grey and white interfaces and standard interactive elements. However, with Smartphones using more attractive displays and elements such as carousels and progress bars, future enterprise applications will need to embrace these attributes to interest users.

SUMMARY

Gaming can teach businesses how to successfully keep their staff and customers engaged, as well as developing more creative and collaborative problem solving. Whether this is through the development of more interesting applications, or by the use of gaming techniques in business processes, there is still much to learn in this space.

With the advent of new forms of user interface, from gesture control to augmented reality, the line between business and gaming will become increasingly blurred. Users accustomed to multiple ways of interacting with data will increasingly rebel against dull and singular interfaces and expect more from their working environment. Companies who embrace this fastest are likely to find themselves at the forefront of their respective industries.

Gamification vision

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With 68,000 professionals operating in 400 offices in 40 countries, CGI fosters local accountability for client success while bringing global delivery capabilities to clients' front doors. Founded in 1976, CGI applies a disciplined delivery approach that has achieved an industry-leading track record of on-time, on-budget projects. Our high-quality business consulting, systems integration and outsourcing services help clients leverage current investments while adopting new technology and business strategies that achieve top and bottom line results. As a demonstration of our commitment, our average client satisfaction score for the past 10 years has measured consistently higher than 9 out of 10.

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