

# YOUR GUIDE TO:

## GAMIFICATION IN ONLINE LEARNING



# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO GAMIFICATION IN ONLINE LEARNING

Gamification has taken the world by storm. Ten years ago, it was a little-known approach used by a select group of forward-thinking pioneers. Today, companies all around the world are using game mechanics to transform their in person and digital training approaches.

Here at Growth Engineering, our award-winning work in gamification has helped organisations such as L'Oréal, HP and Cisco to surpass their learning and development (L&D) targets. And our mission is to help more organisations achieve similar results.

As such, we've pooled together our trademark knowledge and world-class research to bring you **'The Ultimate Gamification Guidebook'**. This handbook will serve as a great starter guide on the key fundamentals of gamification in the world of L&D.

By the end of this guidebook, you will have a solid grasp of what gamification is. We will also cover its key benefits and the neuroscience of how and why gamification works.

What's more, you'll learn about some awesome gamification frameworks and get some powerful tips on how to implement gamification in your training programme.

Ultimately, this guide will set you up for success as you gamify your way towards achieving high-impact learning outcomes!

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# WHAT IS GAMIFICATION?

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The term “gamification” was initially coined in 2002 by Nick Pelling, a British-born computer programmer and inventor.<sup>1</sup> He described gamification as “the application of elements in a user interface to make electronic transactions more enjoyable”.

In the halcyon days of 2014, Gartner sought to redefine ‘gamification’.<sup>2</sup> Here’s what they landed on: gamification is “the use of game mechanics and experience design to digitally engage and motivate people to achieve their goals”.

This is an interesting definition. It covers structural gamification (‘game mechanics’) and content gamification (‘experience design’) and highlights the importance of engagement and driving motivation.

And yet, this definition comes off as both a little too precise and a little too loose. So let’s break it down.

## Is Gamification Digital or Analog?

Interestingly, Gartner’s definition hones in on ‘digital’ engagement. But whilst digital experiences tend to be easier to gamify, they’re not the only types of experience that benefit from this approach.

Think about the loyalty card you receive from your local coffee shop or hairdressers. There’s nothing particularly digital about a piece of paper and a stamp or a sticker. And like with many other loyalty programmes, this kind of gamification is an excellent example of a gamified real-world action.

What’s more, we often use gamification in classroom training without using any digital applications as a crutch. Learners earn Badges<sup>3</sup> throughout the day and climb up our makeshift Leaderboard<sup>4</sup>. We even apply a level structure around our content.

After our examples, can you really say it’s not a gamified experience just because it does not occur within a digital application?

## Does Gamification Require Goals?

In Gartner’s definition, gamification focuses on enabling people to achieve ‘their’ goals. This begs the question: can you not gamify an experience to help people achieve *your* goals?

Could you not create a gamified experience that encourages others to complete a survey you have created? After all, they may not have woken up in the morning with a burning desire to complete a questionnaire, but the use of rewards could be enough to motivate them into action.

Whilst we appreciate the importance of aligning individual and organisational goals, we don’t see how this impacts the definition of gamification. Perhaps Gartner is trying to position gamification as a goal alignment tool.

In other words, you can use gamification to get people on board with your own goals. This means it stops being about helping them realise their own potential. They’re simply doing what you need them to do.

Even if this is true, it doesn’t feel accurate to classify a reconfigured goal as ‘their’ goal. While the motivation has changed, the author of the goal remains the same.

## Gameception: Can You Gamify a Game?

Gamification can’t exist on its own. It needs to be applied to something else. Yet, in capturing this fact, Gartner’s definition seems to come up a little short.

There’s no mention of where the game mechanics (or experience design) need to be applied beyond the ‘digital’ qualifier.

Does that mean that we could describe the gaming mechanics used within video games as an example of gamification? This seems nonsensical on the face of it, but Gartner’s definition doesn’t necessarily rule it out.



## So, How Do We Define Gamification?

As nit-picky as all this may sound, consensus is an important thing. If we're all working from the same base definition, then we're able to have better conversations and drive deeper understanding.

Hence, here at Growth Engineering, we define gamification as **“the application of gaming mechanics to non-gaming environments”**, and we often add the qualification: **“to make difficult tasks more palatable”**.

What we mean by this is that game mechanics help make boring tasks more fun. Instead of dragging your heels and putting off whatever it is you need to do, gamification engages you! You'll jump in, get it done and win that high score!

In the context of L&D, gamification takes elements from game design and the general principles and theories which drive gameplay and applies them to solve business problems.

These problems can range from issues of engagement in the workplace to reducing the costs of your training programmes. Here's a more comprehensive list:

- Learner engagement in workplace training
- Retail staff performance
- Employees' ability to complete tedious and mundane tasks
- Organisational productivity
- Employees' ability to enter 'flow'
- Knowledge retention

“Gamified training is training that incorporates gaming elements or mechanics within its approach.”

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- Crowdsourcing
- Recruitment issues
- Customer retention
- Reducing business costs

## Key Components of Gamification

To break it down further, gamification primarily consists of three main components:

- **Game mechanics:** These are the elements that have been plucked from games and incorporated into your training environment. They specify the learning goals and how players win or progress through levels or earn points. Mechanics include (but are not limited to) Experience Points, Badges, Levels and Leaderboards.
- **Player behaviours:** These are consequent actions that emerge when these game mechanics are executed. They include desired behaviours such as course completions, taking tests, and sharing knowledge.
- **Emotional states:** This is the third piece of the gamification puzzle. These consist of positive or negative emotions evoked during the training experience (such as excitement or disappointment).

### 3 Components of Gamification



Game Mechanics



Emotional States



Player Behaviours

## Key Features of Gamification

A big component of a successful gamification strategy lies in selecting the right gamified features for your training programme. With that said, here are some of the most popular game mechanics:



### Experience Points (XP)

Experience Points are points that learners earn as they progress through their training. They are an indication of a learner's mastery over their learning environment.



### Badges

Badges are virtual or physical tokens of personal achievement. They help to provide positive reinforcement for your learners.



### Leaderboards

Utilising a Leaderboard helps to tap into your learners' intrinsic motivations. Everyone wants to be acknowledged and praised. These mechanics work particularly well amongst a competitive audience.



### Levels

Levels are another indication of learner progress. Each Level should present new content and challenges to help keep interest levels high.



### Battles

Battles are player-vs-player or team-vs-team knowledge quizzes that utilise a penalty shoot-out format. They tap into the competitive nature of your learners.



### Scorecards

A scorecard provides a handy summary of all your learners' achievements so far. It contains a breakdown of their Experience Points, Badges and Leaderboard position.



### Streaks

A streak is a period of time during which something continues to happen. For instance, you could reward your learners for answering three questions correctly in a row or completing five training courses in five days.



### Rewards

With a Reward Centre, you can tap into your learners' extrinsic motivations. They can convert Experience Points and Badges into real-world rewards, such as vouchers, charitable donations or additional holiday days!

## Gamification vs Game-Based Learning

At first glance, gamification and game-based learning may seem to be interchangeable terms. We wouldn't blame you for thinking this, as they do sound very similar and can serve a common purpose.

For instance, both approaches seek to leverage the fun in games to increase engagement in the workplace. But did you know that they're completely different?

While both terms combine both games and learning, the difference lies in how they are applied in a learning environment.

Let's take the case of gamification. As defined earlier, gamification is the process of applying game mechanics to non-gaming scenarios, such as learning. Essentially you have a traditionally structured training programme or a learning management system (LMS), and you sprinkle your gaming mechanics on top of it to add some extra oomph.

Game-based learning<sup>5</sup>, on the other hand, is almost a reversal of this. With this approach, you deliver your learners a fully-fledged, interactive game. This game is used as the foundation and the training content is added or woven into it.

Learning games typically involve playing a segment of the game before being presented with some more traditional online learning material.

The game helps to boost engagement levels as you work through your training content. This, in turn, helps you to take in more of the training and increase knowledge retention.

As such, game-based learning uses the actual game to drive the learning experience. Gamification, on the other hand, focuses on the game components which are added to an instruction method or learning platform.

## Final Words

Phew! We got there in the end. Now you have a basic understanding of gamification, its components and mechanics.

While there are hundreds of different gamification definitions, understanding the basic elements will help you to identify the true essence of gamification.

Before we move to the nitty-gritty, let's explore the history of gamification in more detail. After all, understanding where gamification came from helps you to comprehend its current trends and use cases!



# THE HISTORY OF GAMIFICATION

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Now that we have a clear handle on what gamification is and isn't, it's important to understand how gamification has evolved through time.

The history of gamification is a long one. Since gamification has been recognised as a powerful engagement tool, it has become almost a standard feature of software design.

With such a ubiquitous feature, it's easy to forget that before 2003 nobody had even uttered (much less heard) the word 'gamification'.

Sit tight, and let's take a journey through the history of gamification to see how much it has changed over the years!

## The History of Gamification: The 1900s

### 1908 - The Boy Scout movement is founded

The Boy Scouts awarded members with badges to recognise their achievements. Scouts could earn badges for becoming proficient in an activity, acting according to the principles of the organisation and for attending special events.



### 1973 - The power of games to engage employees is recognised.

Released in 1973, *The Game of Work* was written by Charles A. Coonradt to address the issue of flagging productivity in the US.<sup>6</sup> Noticing that productivity was failing as sales of recreation and sports equipment was rising, Coonradt suggested that fun-and-games might be the answer to the thorny problem of employee engagement.

### 1978 - The birth of social video games

Roy Trubshaw and Richard Bartle develop MUD1, the first Multi-User Dungeon game.<sup>7</sup> Though its text-based interface was unimpressive by today's standards, it lit the fuse for the explosion of social online gaming.

### 1981 - Gamification takes to the skies

American Airlines releases the world's first frequent flier programme, AAdvantage.<sup>8</sup> The initiative sought to encourage customer loyalty by offering rewards for frequent patronage - a model we still see today in every high-street coffee shop.

### 1981 - Academics recognise the potential of gaming

With computer games demonstrating inherent abilities to engage users, articles start to appear exploring possible uses. In 1981, Thomas W. Malone released *Toward a Theory of Intrinsically Motivating Instruction*<sup>9</sup> and *Heuristics for Designing Enjoyable User Interfaces*<sup>10</sup>. These two articles outlined what could be learned from computer games and how they could be applied to other areas.

### 1996 - Game players are categorised

MUD1 developer Richard Bartle defines four gamer types<sup>11</sup> based on how different people approach playing a game. This model would go on to become a cornerstone of many gamification initiatives.

### 1999 - Fun is taken seriously

More and more people are starting to recognise the power of 'fun'. Stephen W. Draper releases a paper<sup>12</sup> suggesting that user enjoyment should be a major requirement of all software design.

## The History of Gamification: The 2000s

In the years leading up to the end of the millennium, the power of game mechanics was slowly gaining recognition.

As 1999 drew to a close and everyone was singing Prince songs, nobody could have suspected the cultural sensation that gamification was about to become.

During the latter part of the 20th Century, people started to consider games as a way to increase productivity in the workplace. With the conception of Frequent Flier rewards, organisations also realised the power of game mechanics in engaging their customers.

As such, when we entered the new millennium, we had seen some impressive successes and had an inkling of a truly effective engagement model. The only thing missing was a name...

## 2002 - 'Gamification' is born

While designing a game-like user interface for commercial electronic devices (like ATMs, vending machines and mobile phones) Nick Pelling coins the 'deliberately ugly' word, gamification.<sup>13</sup> With a name in place, the history of gamification truly begins.

The same year, America's Army was released.<sup>14</sup> This was an educational first-person shooter game. It was dubbed by the U.S. Army to be a "cost-effective recruitment tool".

Similarly, the Serious Gaming Initiative (a project of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars) is founded.<sup>15</sup>

## 2005 - The first modern gamification platform

Rajat Paharia founded Bunchball, a platform designed to boost engagement on websites by adding a layer of game mechanics.<sup>16</sup> It would be another three years before they adopt the term 'gamification'.

The same year, Microsoft introduced Xbox 360 Gamerscore, standardising in-game achievements.<sup>17</sup>

## 2007 - Gamification in the home

In 2007, Kevan Davis develops Chore Wars.<sup>18</sup> The site is designed to incentivise the act of doing chores by turning it into a game. With its fantasy role-playing game theme, Chore Wars finds favour with parents, children and even fastidious flatmates!

## 2008 - Gamification goes on record

In a blog article<sup>19</sup>, Bret Terrill covers his time at the 2008 Social Gaming Summit and uses the term 'gamification' for the first time:

*"In conversations, one of the biggest topics ... is the gameification of the web. The basic idea is taking game mechanics and applying to other web properties to increase engagement."*

Unfortunately for Bret, his particular spelling didn't stick! In the same year, Sony begins offering Trophies as digital rewards on the PlayStation 3.

## 2009 - Gamification all over the place

2009 saw the launch of Foursquare, an app allowing users to search for and discover new places.<sup>20</sup> Aside from being a social tool, Foursquare also lets users collect Badges and other achievements. For example, by checking into the same place more than anyone else within a 60 day period, the user could become the 'Mayor' of that location.

In 2009, the gamification platform, BigDoor, was founded.<sup>21</sup> They started to provide gamified customer-loyalty solutions.



## The History of Gamification: The 2010s

By 2010, gamification was getting the recognition it deserved. But things were about to get really interesting. As gamification starts to go stratospheric, Growth Engineering is locked in a fight-to-the-death against dull online learning.<sup>22</sup>

As the mission to make learning fun continues, gamification looks like a promising addition to their arsenal...

### 2010 - Gamification changes the world

Jane McGonigal delivers her groundbreaking TED Talk, *Gaming Can Make a Better World*<sup>23</sup>, in which she prophesies a game-based paradise:

*"When I look forward to the next decade, I know two things for sure: that we can make any future we can imagine, and we can play any games we want, so I say: Let the world-changing games begin."*

This talk could well be the defining moment in the history of gamification.

But that's not all. At the 2010 DICE Conference, Jesse Schell predicts that gamification will end up everywhere, from your toothbrush to your tax returns.<sup>24</sup>

Simultaneously, Gabe Zichermann releases *"Game-Based Marketing: Inspire Customer Loyalty"*, which examines how game mechanics can be used to engage customers.<sup>25</sup>

As the term 'gamification' gains traction, organisations like Bunchball and Badgeville adopt the term to describe their services.

### 2011 - Gamification explodes

Gamification Co. hosted the inaugural Gsummit in San Francisco, attracting around 400 attendees - a number that would double by 2014.<sup>26</sup> Jane McGonigal's game-changer, *Reality is Broken*, is officially released at the summit.<sup>27</sup>

A workshop entitled *"Gamification: Using Game Design Elements in Non-Gaming Contexts"* is held at the CHI (Computer-Human Interaction) 2011 conference<sup>28</sup>, spawning the Gamification Research Network.<sup>29</sup>

### 2012 - More hype for gamification

After adding gamification to its Hype Cycle in 2010, Gartner<sup>30</sup> predicts that by 2014, *"70% of Global 2000 organizations will have at least one gamified application"*.

Amazon releases its GameCircle service to track achievements and leaderboards.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, Mozilla Open Badges is launched to create an online standard for recognising learning achievement.<sup>32</sup>

Naomi Alderman also releases *Zombies, Run!*, a fitness app that turns a run in the park into a chilling zombie-escape game.<sup>33</sup>

Last but not least, Badgeville gets \$25 million funding, which showcases the growing confidence in gamification.<sup>34</sup>

### 2013 - More gamification research

Gamification 2013 is held at the University of Waterloo Stratford Campus. This conference brings together research in a variety of fields, from not-for-profit to customer engagement.

Gabe Zichermann's talk *"The Gamification Revolution: How to Use Engagement as a Winning Strategy from Top to Bottom"*<sup>35</sup> is voted the #1 presentation at GSummit 2013.

In 2013, Amazon also upgrades its FreeTime parental guidance system on Kindle devices. This lets parents reward their children for reaching educational goals.<sup>36</sup>



## 2014 - Gamification is dead?!

With a large percentage of gamification initiatives not having the desired impact, a slew of articles appear declaring the end of gamification as a business strategy.<sup>37</sup>

However, further examination of the phenomenon shows that these initiatives failed because their implementation was not tied to a clear business goal.

As a result, gamification begins to be seen not as a miracle cure to poor engagement but as a tool to combat it.

*"We found that gamification is indeed very useful to engage audiences, but it's not necessarily the thing that drives the actual conversion and the actual revenue."*  
- Petar Karafezov, Senior Digital Marketing Manager EMEA, Adobe.

Live World Finals of the Loyalty Gamification World Championship are held online.

## 2015 - Gamification and millennials

Gallup research is released showing alarming trends in employee engagement.<sup>38</sup> The research finds that only 31% of employees are engaged with their work and that millennials are the least engaged group (28.9%).

HR departments of major companies launch gamification trials to address the engagement issue. The Google Play Games app is updated to let users record and share video from supported mobile games.<sup>39</sup>

## 2016 - Gamification goes viral (and no one realises)

Pokémon Go is one of the most successful applications of gamification, with over 800 million downloads. People who would normally turn their nose up at badge collection were out patrolling the streets searching for rare pokemon!

In fact, Pokémon Go is one of the most successful apps of all time, breaking the following records<sup>40</sup>:

- Highest-grossing mobile game in its first month
- Most downloads in its first month for a mobile game
- Most international charts topped simultaneously
- Fastest time to gross \$100 million

And experts agree that Pokemon Go's success was driven in large part by the addictive nature of game mechanics.<sup>41</sup>

In 2016 Snapchat also released Streaks, introducing the world to a whole new gamification feature!

As part of its AlphaGo project, Google DeepMind designs an artificial intelligence to become an expert gamer.<sup>42</sup>

Lee Sedol, the world champion of Go, a Chinese board game, concedes defeat to the computer in March.

In order to win, AlphaGo needed to adapt its strategy on the fly with every move that Sedol made.

## 2017 - Gamification advocates meet up

This was the year that Gamification Europe arrived on the scene.<sup>43</sup> For the first time, hundreds of passionate gamification advocates came together to share ideas and strategies.

Additionally, the World Government Summit put together a strategy for applying gamification in education. These two events mark the beginnings of game mechanics being applied more broadly.

2017 could be seen as the year that gamification goes from being a novel concept to a tool that designers across the world are using without even realising it.

## 2018 - Gamification everywhere

By 2018, nearly all apps include gamification in some way. Gamification is no longer just found on language learning and exercise apps, but meditation, to-do lists, job applications, litter picking, wildlife spotting, tea collecting... you name it — there's a gamified app for it.

## 2021 - Gamification and AI working in tandem

In 2021, user experience starts gaining even more importance. Organisations and educational institutions alike adopt Artificial Intelligence (AI) to take gamification to a higher level.

## Final Words

It's much harder to spot gamification these days. Not because there's less of it — but because there's just so darn much of it. Gamification truly is everywhere!

It has now got lots of different names, from behavioural design to engagement-focused experience. But considering the rich history of gamification, this does not come as a surprise.

Regardless of the terms we use, one thing is clear: organisations, educational institutions and L&D professionals alike have understood and experienced the power of gamification. But where does this power actually come from?

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# THE NEUROSCIENCE OF GAMIFICATION IN ONLINE LEARNING

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We already know that games and gamification can be extremely effective in online learning. After all, these mechanics work in perfect harmony with the most complex informational hardware in the known universe — the human brain.

Understanding the basic neuroscience behind a topic will help you to comprehend it better. But we want to dig a little deeper than that!

As such, this section of your guidebook brings you ten facts about what makes gamification so effective in online learning.

Ready? Let's go!



## 1. Gamification Forges an Emotional Connection

Gamification creates a narrative around the learning activity that describes why the task is relevant to the learner. According to University of Reading researchers, attention spans are affected by the subject's emotional connection with the activity.

*"We found that participants' attention is affected by emotion and priority, such that they pay more attention to particularly vivid information or details that are highly relevant to them, but their retention of low-priority information is impaired."*

- Michiko Sakaki

## 2. The Hippocampus Controls Recall

The hippocampus is an area in the lower section of the brain that is largely responsible for knowledge recall. During learning, a strong hippocampal activation makes the content easier to remember and recall.<sup>44</sup>

In clinical tests, gameplay has been shown to stimulate these conditions.

*"Identifying a direct connection between the stimulation of neural circuits and gameplay is a key step in unlocking the potential for game-based tools to inspire positive behaviour and improve health."*

- Brian Knutson

## 3. Dopamine Creates Positive Associations with Learning

Dopamine, also known as the feel-good hormone, is released whenever we are rewarded for a specific action. And as we know, gamification focuses on giving learners instantaneous feedback which might not otherwise be available.<sup>45</sup>

By giving virtual rewards for achieving learning goals, learners begin to associate the learning with positive emotions. This, in turn, prompts them to try to repeat the action. In an L&D context, this means seeking more learning opportunities.

## 4. The Brain Processes Stories Better than Facts

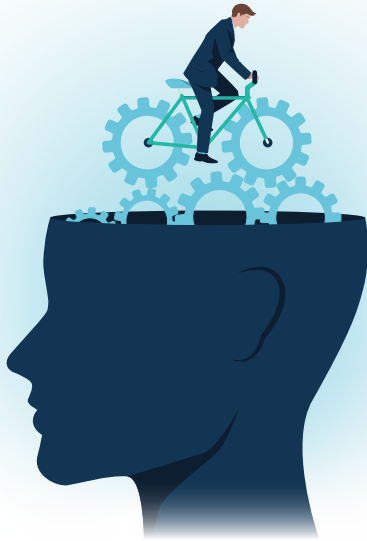
One of the key components of a compelling game is a good story.<sup>46</sup> People tend to remember stories better than lists of unconnected facts. This isn't just a matter of preference; it's a physiological imperative.

When we are engaged in a strong narrative, the brain releases oxytocin - a chemical that generates feelings of trust and empathy. As a result, when the brain receives information presented as a story, it recognises it as being more valid.

## 5. Badges and Rewards Can Trigger Serotonin Release

Serotonin is a hormone that governs our overall mood. Plenty of serotonin makes for a sunny disposition, whereas a drop in serotonin might leave you feeling a bit grumpy.

Aside from, for example, eating properly, serotonin release is also triggered by remembering past successes.<sup>47</sup> The badge cabinet of a gamified learning management system lets learners get a serotonin rush on-demand, whenever they look at rewards they have earned.



## 6. Playing Games Releases Endorphins

The thrill and excitement of playing a game is the result of endorphins being released. Endorphins are the body's natural painkiller. They can also lower stress and anxiety levels. In fact, endorphins can even create a sense of euphoria.

Combined with other neurotransmitters, this helps you to create an ideal environment for focused learning.<sup>48</sup>

## 7. Playing Games Keeps The Brain Fit

Studies have shown that gameplay can improve brain functions. For example, in a study conducted by BBC's Horizon, a test group of older subjects played a popular racing game for 15 hours over five weeks.<sup>49</sup>

When they were evaluated after that period, their memory and attention span scores had improved by around 30%.

## 8. Gameplay Reduces Stress

Cortisol is known as the stress hormone, and it controls the body's reaction to stressful situations. When it comes to learning, high levels of cortisol force the brain into survival mode.

Dealing with this stress can be distracting. However, the results of a Texas A&M International University study showed that games reduce depression and hostile feelings in players through mood management.<sup>50</sup>

## 9. Gamification Helps Deal With Cognitive Overload

The brain can only handle a finite amount of information. If the cognitive load is too great, the learner could miss information. And this, in turn, can result in incomplete training.

One way that gamification can help with cognitive overload is to present the learning in a more game-like, challenge-based format. Presenting information in the form of 'Levels' helps to achieve this.

Along with the other neurological benefits of gamification, this approach helps to chunk the learning into smaller pieces. These smaller chunks are then easier to retain.

## 10. Games Teach Work Skills

The workforce is filled with people who grew up playing complex video games that require intricate coordination. By commanding a Roman army to victory or managing the facilities of a virtual city, players can gain important skills like resource management and prioritisation.

*"These young people may be better equipped to switch between tasks easily, adapt to new information, and modify their strategy as new input comes in."*  
- Judy Willis, M.D., American Academy of Neurology

With gamification and game-based learning producing some outstanding results, the scientific community is conducting more and more research into the power of gameplay in non-gaming scenarios.



## The Final Word

Now that we understand the relationship between gamification and neuroscience, we know why it's so effective. Our brains crave fun and excitement. And gamification does a great job of triggering neurotransmitters (such as dopamine, oxytocin and serotonin) that make us feel good.

This shows us that gamification can provide high-impact engagement.

Next up, we'll start exploring the numerous benefits that come from a gamified training approach.

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# KEY BENEFITS OF GAMIFICATION

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There are many benefits of gamification. And the numbers prove it. The latest stats show that 83% of employees who undergo gamified training are more motivated at work.<sup>51</sup>

Still need convincing? You're in luck! We've compiled the seven most compelling ways gamification can benefit you, your learners and your organisation.

## 1. It Boosts Learner Engagement

Learning feels awesome because it triggers a heady rush of happy hormones. So when learners enjoy training, they feel engaged and want to keep learning.

In fact, gamification experts suggest there is a direct link between positive emotions and behaviour change.

## 2. It Empowers Learners to Control Their Learning Outcomes

Game mechanics like 'Levels' help to make learning experiences more personalised and adaptive.

Additionally, branching level structures help your employees to focus on the training materials that are most relevant to them. They also give your training materials more Epic Meaning!<sup>52</sup>

## 3. It Promotes a Knowledge-Sharing Environment

Points and rewards can be used to encourage social activity. In a similar fashion, peer feedback and knowledge sharing through virtual clubs fuel community spirit. In turn, this helps to create a strong learning culture.

## 4. It Drives Healthy Competition

You could say levels are like a competition with yourself. And what's more motivating than that? A competition with fellow learners of course! Leaderboards let learners see how their achievements stack up against their colleagues.

Each learner should be ranked on the leaderboards according to how many Badges or Experience Points they've collected. This means there's only one way to beat your friends (and rivals) to the top - engage, train and learn!

## 5. It Enables Shorter Feedback Cycles

Gamification tools let you spot engagement patterns instantly! As your employees complete training, they earn rewards, climb the Leaderboard and level up. In essence, looking at these different progress indicators is a great way to see if your training is engaging your audience.

This approach works particularly well within a gamified online learning environment.

## 6. It Drives Behavioural Change

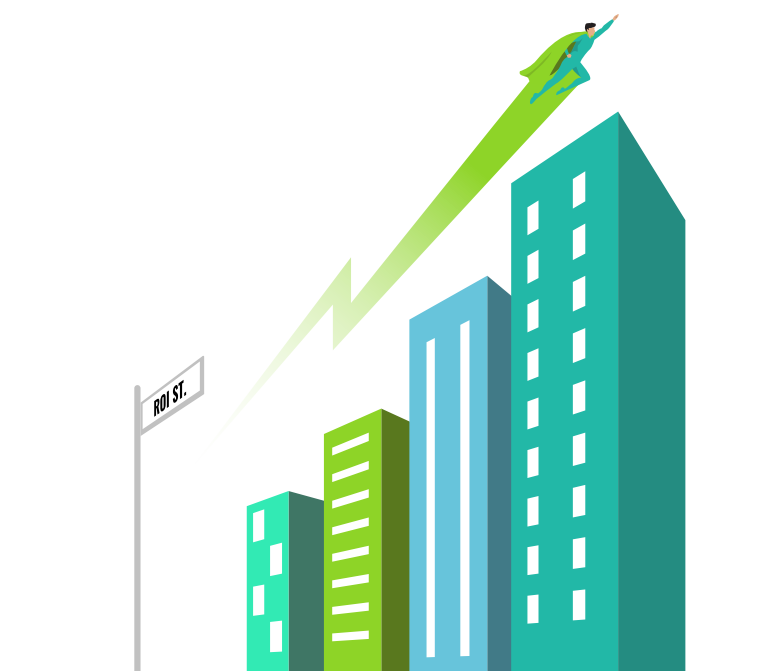
By gamifying your training, you create engaged employees who are more likely to stay motivated to complete your training modules. Incentives such as points and badges help reinforce positive learning patterns.

In fact, a study suggests that technologies such as gamified apps are twice as influential on your behaviour than traditional (non-gamified) solutions.<sup>53</sup>

## 7. Return on Investment (ROI)

Now for the hard figures! By using gamification to create fun and engaging online learning, you ensure learners complete training content and achieve lasting behaviour change.

The result? ROI shoots up! In fact, gamification has been shown to boost employee productivity by 90%.<sup>54</sup>



## Final Words

This was a whistle-stop tour of why we love game mechanics. The vast benefits make gamification an excellent and desirable tool for organisations and educational institutions alike.

But how do you actually use it in your training interventions? The next sections of this guidebook focus on how you can take advantage of this highly beneficial training approach!

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## HOW GAMIFICATION IN TRAINING WORKS

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We have looked at the definition of gamification, its colourful history, its benefits and the neuroscience behind it. That means it's time to explore how gamification works in training and its relevance for the workplace of today.

Did you know that engagement in training continues to be the number one challenge for L&D professionals?<sup>55</sup> In fact, companies worldwide lose a staggering \$13.5m per year per 1,000 employees, due to ineffective training.<sup>56</sup>

On a similar note, over 68% of HR leaders see the need to build critical skills and competencies.<sup>57</sup> This would enable their organisations to thrive amidst today's business challenges.<sup>58</sup>

Without a doubt, effective training and onboarding programmes are needed now more than ever. With this in mind, let the game-based goodness begin!

### Gamified Training vs Traditional Training Programmes

Gamification has come a long way since it first arrived on the scene. It has become a popular choice among L&D professionals. This is because it helps to address the ineffectiveness of traditional training programmes.

In many cases, your training materials will consist of simple text and image-based documents or eLearning units.

Then there's your face-to-face training. This will likely involve employees cooped up in a room listening to a live lecture or video presentation.

Moreover, traditional training often fails to cater to the distinct learning needs of different generations. For instance, old-fashioned learning formats<sup>59</sup> will no longer cut it for today's modern learner.<sup>60</sup>

Conversely, several studies have shown the positive impact of gamified training over traditional learning methods.

For instance, one survey finds that 95% of employees enjoy having game-inspired elements incorporated in their work environment.<sup>61</sup> Another study has found that gamification improves learning retention by up to 90%.<sup>62</sup> The results speak for themselves!

### How Is Gamification Effective in Training?

In the previous section, we got you excited with some stats supporting the effectiveness of gamification in training. But how and why does gamified training work? Here are five factors...

#### 1. Gamification is Backed By Brain Science

As we know by now, gamification releases neurotransmitters that help us feel good. This gives gamified learning an addictive quality. After all, we tend to repeat actions that create a positive reaction.

Adding game-based elements, such as Badges, to your training helps you to unleash these neurotransmitters. As a result, you free a powerful chemical cocktail that will help drive both engagement and behaviour change.



## 2. Gamification Draws From Intrinsic & Extrinsic Motivations

Gamification in training provides a conducive learning environment by tapping into the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of learners.<sup>63</sup>

For example, earning rewards and climbing up the Leaderboard keep learners engaged with their learning outcomes. More importantly, it taps into the deeper motivations of learners, such as their desire for meaning and achievement.<sup>64</sup>

As such, gamification helps learners achieve sustained engagement!

## 3. Gamification Mobilises Proactive Behaviours

Humans are instinctively inclined to repeat behaviours or actions that provide us with satisfaction.<sup>65</sup>

Drawing from this, earning Badges and Experience Points or climbing up a Leaderboard helps to create deeper levels of gratification. In this way, your learners will be motivated to repeat desired behaviours. And through these recurring behaviours, you can reinforce and retain learning better in the long run.<sup>66</sup>



## 4. Gamification Enables Real-Time & Flexible Assessments

Game mechanics provide an active screenshot of a learner's performance at any given point in their training. Similarly, these mechanics can help shape assessments to fit the evolving needs of modern learners.<sup>67</sup>

For instance, tests and assessments can be transformed into fun-sized challenges filled with reinforcing triggers such as XP and Badges. These address modern learners' short attention spans by keeping them repeatedly engaged.

Likewise, training administrators can easily glean insights about their audience's progress from within the gamified environment. For example, functionality such as gamified assessments and customised learning pathways provide insight into how your learners are fairing with their training journey.

Through gamification, you provide your learners with a greater degree of flexibility and personalisation — a definite must-have for today's modern workplace!<sup>68</sup>

## 5. Gamification Empowers Social Learning

Game-based features such as Battles and real-time feedback work wonders when combined with the power of social learning.<sup>69</sup>

But this should come as no surprise as many of today's most popular games incorporate multiple social elements.<sup>70</sup> Common social features include activity feeds, in-game chats and push notifications.

According to the 70:20:10 model of learning, 90% of everything we learn at work takes place outside of our formal training experiences.<sup>71</sup>

As such, combining gamification and social learning allows you to create an environment where informal learning experiences can flourish.

Through gamification, no stone is left unturned when it comes to different ways of learning!

## Gamification in Training: Do's & Don'ts

### Do's

#### 1. Align with Business & Learning Objectives

Conduct a training needs analysis<sup>72</sup> before creating your gamification strategy. It is important to establish the goals of the training and the problem areas that need fixing. You can then select the game mechanics that are most suitable for your needs.

## 2. Epic Meaning: What's In It For Me?

Once you've established your goals, find out what really matters to your employees. Namely, answer your learner's WIIFM (What's In It For Me) by communicating how the training will meet *their* goals.<sup>73</sup>

In effect, you will create Epic Meaning by showing them how training goals are aligned with your company's wider values and aspirations.

## 3. Personalisation

Everyone likes to feel special. So give your learners a tailored training experience that they'll remember. By using gaming mechanics such as level pathways and storylines, you can make training more personal for your employees.

## 4. Microlearning

Combat dull, lengthy and boring training by breaking it down into digestible chunks of bite-sized content.<sup>74</sup>

When you provide microcontent to your learners in spaced-out intervals, you will reinforce the learning and avoid the dreaded Forgetting Curve<sup>75</sup>.

## 5. Encourage Social Learning

Social learning is a great way to make all that learning stick and boost knowledge retention. This will then transform disengaged employees into active participants in their learning journeys.

Through game-based elements such as Clubs and Battles, learners can communicate with each other or compete as individuals or in teams. This will definitely help reinforce learning and put employees' new skills to the test.

## Don'ts



### 1. Misaligned Objectives

The use of game mechanics can backfire if you do not link them to your business objectives. In fact, according to a Gartner study, 80% of businesses that do not clearly identify business objectives will fail.<sup>76</sup>

As such, a gamified training approach will benefit from aligning your mechanics to your specific training needs.

## 2. Neglecting Your Learner's Journey

Even the most sophisticated gamified training environment can fail if the learner's journey is not considered.

- What is your learner aiming to achieve?
- Where are they now in their development?
- How will they reach their destination?

Most importantly, why should they bother learning at all? Determining the answers to these questions can help you to make more informed decisions when it comes to your gamification strategy.

## 3. Complicated Mechanics or Challenges

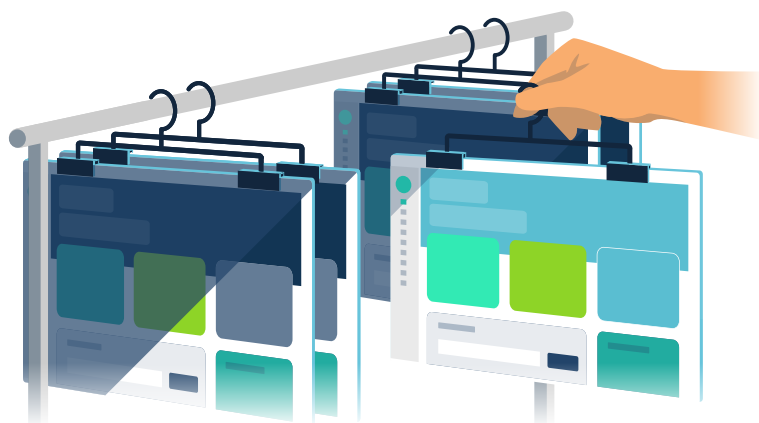
While challenging game mechanics can satisfy a learner's desire for achievement and growth, too much can lead to frustration. If the difficulty level is too high, they may choose to avoid the training altogether.

We recommend that you design challenges that encourage mastery and a sense of satisfaction for your learners.

## 4. Using Gamification To Fix Bad Products or Services

Keep in mind that the role of gamification in training is to address learner disengagement. If the root of the problem is a faulty product or service, then gamification is not the answer.

Oftentimes, companies that fail in their training efforts have unsolved underlying organisational issues. As such, you should take care to fix broken processes or products before you consider any gamification strategies.



## 5. Implement the Wrong Tools

Avoid going overboard with game elements and tools just for the sake of gamifying your training programme. Design and implement a gamified environment that suits your workers and the values of your organisation.

Failure to do this runs the risk of further disengaging employees. This will steer you away from achieving your training programme objectives.

### Gamifying Classroom Training vs Gamifying Digital Classroom Training

Adding gamification to your classroom training can be extremely effective. Your sessions will become more fun and interactive. And as a result, your participants will get much more out of the training.

You can incorporate various game mechanics into your classroom. For example, you can put up a Leaderboard, award Badges throughout the day and divide your classroom into teams to encourage healthy competition.

These kinds of short-term rewards can help learners to meet their learning objectives. After all, learning becomes more visible through these progress indicators. Learners can identify if they are going in the right direction with their learning activities. As such, learners can take ownership over their learning.

However, the classroom space has changed dramatically in recent years. There are now more digital solutions to contend with and virtual classroom sessions are much more popular.

One way to deliver digital classroom training is to adopt a learning management system (LMS).

These learning platforms cater to various gamification features. As a result, gamification has become increasingly linked to digital learning technology. Now, gamified LMSs are one of the key elements of an effective online learning strategy

### Final Words

The aim of gamification is to create engagement and drive behaviour change. To achieve this, a well-designed gamification strategy must be put in place.

Programme objectives must be aligned with the needs of your audience. This should be paired with a good UX design and the right set of game mechanics.

Having a clear measurement plan will also help you link your game mechanics to wider business goals. This will allow you to make the essential tweaks needed to keep your users engaged.

Gamification, in its essence, is a human-centric approach that should ultimately empower your employees.

We encourage you to use gamification as a way to create positive change. Failing to do so may create superficial engagement and short-term outcomes.

As such, you must approach gamification with meaningful and responsible intentions. Only then can you leverage its power to achieve worthwhile and long-term results!



# HOW GAMIFICATION CAN HELP ACHIEVE BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

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The world of work has changed *a lot* in the past few decades. Gone are the endless grey cubicles, humongous computers and jobs-for-life.

In their place are open-plan offices (bean bags optional!), rapid technological developments and job-hopping. The last few years have ushered in remote working and hybrid working models. Indeed, in the modern business world, only one thing is certain - change.

The question is, *how* do we respond, adapt and pre-empt the changes ahead to succeed in the future?

Many companies throughout the world have turned to gamification for the answer. They're using gaming mechanics such as Badges, Levels and Leaderboards to engage employees, boost productivity and drive business success.

Now *you* can too, thanks to the seven tips below!

## 1. Retain Talent

87% of business leaders say retaining top talent is a key business priority.<sup>77</sup> And with good reason! Low employee retention leads to loss of expertise, lower profits and increased training costs.

All this means it takes an estimated £30,000 (or \$41,160) to replace each employee!<sup>78</sup> Fail to retain your team, and they'll seek work elsewhere - taking their talent and potential straight to your competitors!

### The Gamification Solution

65% of employees say that access to training opportunities would increase their company loyalty.<sup>79</sup>

But this doesn't mean you should churn out run-of-the-mill training! No one wants to spend hours clicking through boring, generic content slides! They want engaging and meaningful development opportunities.

A gamified LMS gives employees access to the training they desire! Gaming mechanics such as Badges, Experience Points and Leaderboards infuse the learning experience with clear goals, motivating rewards and healthy competition.

As such, access to the *right kind* of training will boost employee retention! After all, when training is fun and rewarding, quitting their job will be the last thing on their mind.

## 2. Engage Employees

70% of business transformation efforts fail due to a lack of engagement.<sup>80</sup> By contrast, team productivity shoots up when employee engagement is high.

It's easy to see why! When your team feels emotionally connected to the business mission they'll put the extra effort in to achieve it. But how can you increase engagement?

### The Gamification Solution

A good place to start is by showing your team they are valued! When employees feel their contribution is valued their engagement increases.<sup>81</sup> Yet, only 26% of people feel valued in their jobs.<sup>82</sup> With the right tools, you can change this!

Virtual rewards are the perfect way to regularly recognise and celebrate each employee's efforts!

For instance, managers can reward employees with customised Praise Badges on their LMS to recognise when their team has gone above and beyond. Personal touches like this show each employee their work and development is valued.

## 3. Hold Onto Intellectual Capital

Everyone looks forward to retiring one day. But spare a thought for our poor HR teams! A whopping 10,000 people retire in the US alone per day.<sup>83</sup>

This mass exodus is often called the 'brain drain' because when employees retire, they take all their intellectual capital with them!

Of course, this is only a problem if the departing experts have hoarded their knowledge rather than sharing it with colleagues.

### The Gamification Solution

Discussion groups on your learning management system are the perfect succession planning tool! They create a space to celebrate expertise whilst simultaneously training other employees to fill future leadership roles.

Each discussion group can focus on a certain topic, which creates an online space for subject matter experts to answer colleagues' questions. You can even add Leaderboards to the groups to get the conversations flowing!

Each contributor earns points every time they comment in the groups. The person with the most XP tops the Leaderboard.

This way everyone can see who really knows their stuff and whose brain to pick. It's also the perfect way to spot the subject matter experts of the future!

## 4. Create A Learning Community

It's not just the experts or senior leaders who have something important to say! Every single one of your team members plays a vital role in creating a learning culture that supports informal learning.

This matters because informal learning is responsible for 90% of what we know. It includes everything we learn from social interactions. Yet nurturing social butterflies can be a challenge. So, how can you encourage knowledge sharing at all levels of the business?

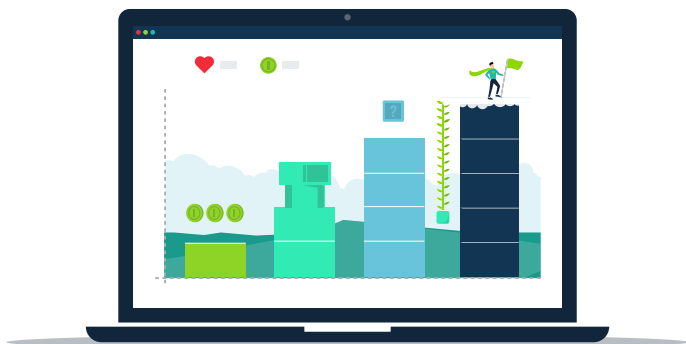
### The Gamification Solution

LMS message boards and social feeds provide a brilliant place for learners to support each other's development. As each employee interacts with the LMS and completes training, the virtual rewards they earn appear on the news feed.

This means their colleagues can see their achievements and send them a virtual high five!

Employees can also rate the content they find useful, guiding their colleagues to the most valuable assets. Peer feedback drives engagement with the platform!

All this imbues the LMS with a community spirit that engages learners and creates a strong learning culture.



## 5. Plug The Skills Gap!

Today's business world faces a big problem — one in four people say they don't have the skills needed to do their current job!<sup>84</sup> And this problem is only set to get worse.

In fact, 50% of all workers will need reskilling by 2025.<sup>85</sup> Without the right skills, your team won't be able to achieve business objectives. So how can you plug your skills gaps?

### The Gamification Solution

Use Levels to plug skills gaps by giving employees personalised training that meets their specific needs. Levels on your LMS let you group training content into categories and assign each employee to the level that's right for them.

This way everyone is guided towards content that best suits their needs, role and ability.

You can assign employees based on their team, location or length of service. You can then choose to push content to everyone on the LMS or just one group.

Levels help employees focus on the training that's meaningful to them rather than sifting through reams of irrelevant content. This gives the content Epic Meaning and helps you effectively fill those skills gaps!

## 6. Reinforce Your Company Brand

Like most companies, you probably have a mission and set of values designed to unite your teams and drive positive behaviour. Yet, only 4 in 10 people actually know what their company stands for.<sup>86</sup>

On the other hand, when employees 'know and understand' their company's values, they feel more engaged at work. So how can you ensure your teams embrace your company brand, mission and values?

### The Gamification Solution

Raise employee awareness of your company brand by increasing its visibility. To do this, you'll need to embed your mission and values within every aspect of your LMS.

For example, on Growth Engineering LMS, you can fully customise gamification features to create Epic Meaning.

If your company's raison d'être is confectionery, make sure this theme runs throughout the platform. You could shower your employees in virtual 'rainbow sprinkles' rather than typical XP, design your Badges to look like sweets or let employees level up from Cupcake Corner to Chocolate Champions!

As well as adding extra fun, customising the LMS reminds employees about the wider purpose of their development at every stage of the learning journey.

## 7. Evaluate Success

Every business department has to prove its worth. Let's take your training department as an example. On average, companies spend \$702 on training per employee per year.<sup>87</sup> Yet, this budget isn't guaranteed.

One of the most important tasks for any learning and development department is showing that training is worth the continued investment. To do this, you'll need to show clear evidence of return on investment. But how?

### The Gamification Solution

Gamification tools let you spot engagement patterns *instantly!* As your employees complete training and interact with the LMS, they earn virtual rewards, climb the Leaderboard and level up.

Looking at the gamified features is a simple way to see if training is engaging your end users. The higher the Level employees reach, the more engaged they are with the content.

Reviews and ratings are other clear indicators of training success. After all, few budget gatekeepers can argue with a rave review declaring: "I now understand our company values and how to do my job. I want more of this awesome training!"

### Final Words

Our seven top tips will help you to ensure you utilise gamification to its fullest potential. After all, it can be an excellent tool for retaining your talent and bridging any prevailing skills gaps.

And that covers only some of the reasons why we love gamification here at Growth Engineering. We have seen its capabilities first hand and vouch for its importance! But not everyone is as convinced of its effectiveness as we are.

As such, in the next section, we will focus on debunking some persistently prevailing objections to gamification.



# THE 10 MOST COMMON OBJECTIONS TO GAMIFICATION (OVERRULED)

Gamification as an approach in business continues to receive its fair share of objections. These range from gamification being considered superficial or unnecessary, to it being too costly or hard to measure.

We understand where all this scepticism is coming from. Such objections stem from common misconceptions regarding gamification.

Its top critics typically belong to two groups. One group are the detached cynics, who are quick to discount its value without fully understanding the concept.

The other group consists of dejected professionals or organisations who were unable to find success with their gamification approach. As such, they rashly conclude that gamification in itself is flawed and ineffective.

## Objection 1: Gamification is a marketing fad that will soon die away

This criticism suggests that gamification is a dying art form. However, the reality is quite different. In fact, the global gamification market is set to reach \$30.7 billion by 2025. The industry is growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 27.4%.<sup>88</sup>

Big companies such as Google, HP and L'Oréal continue to expand their gamification initiatives. Small businesses are also gamifying their recruitment and customer acquisition activities.

The popularity of gamification will also continue to grow as it evolves in new and exciting ways.

New technologies are integrating with gamification to create even better user experiences. For instance, companies are adding AR, VR and MR capabilities within their gamified online systems. They are using these to create next-level customer service in-store.<sup>89</sup>

With the flexibility of gamification, it will continue to evolve to fit the changing needs of today's businesses. We can definitely look forward to its continued influence in the years to come.

**Tip:** Knowledge is power! Get yourself up to date with the latest research and trends on gamification. To start with, you can check out the comprehensive blog and guidebook archive offered by Growth Engineering.<sup>90</sup>

## Objection 2: Gamification is distracting and does not link to real-world goals

Critics insist that gamifying work activities distracts employees from their actual tasks. Instead of focusing on the job at hand, they spend the time playing games and winning points or badges.

Similarly, they worry that gamified training programmes reduce the essence of learning to mere gameplay.

This is far from the truth. In fact, 90% of workers confirm higher productivity levels when their day-to-day tasks are gamified. Gamified training programmes have also been shown to improve employee engagement by over 60%.<sup>91</sup>

Unlike games, the ultimate outcome of gamification isn't to create fun experiences. Instead, it uses fun to motivate your users and drive them towards certain behaviours.

Gamification does this by linking to deeper motivations. One of its best qualities is how it can transform boring or tedious tasks into fun, engaging activities. Brain studies show that when we are engaged, the thinking part of our brain (the prefrontal cortex) increases in density.<sup>92</sup>

This area of the brain handles much of our conscious thought and reasoning. As such, gamifying tasks can actually help employees fully engage with the tasks at hand. With increased focus, this can result in fewer errors and more efficiency.





Fun activities also light up the brain's reward centres. This creates positive emotions, which motivate us to take specific actions.

In the case of L&D programmes, gamification incentivises learners to complete training modules. They are also likely to repeat desired learning behaviours. As such, the use of gamification can form healthy habits!

**Tip:** Design game mechanics around real-world business objectives. A training needs analysis can help with this. You should also consider whether your objectives meet the learning needs of your audience.

### Objection 3: Gamification won't work well with our type of employees or learners

Here's another objection we hear all the time: gamification won't work with older employees, or those who don't enjoy playing video games.

Others say that this kind of approach will only serve a niche generation or a specific learning audience.

Many studies have debunked this myth. They show how gamification can appeal to different demographics or learner types.<sup>93</sup>

After all, gamification taps into the same universal motivations that all humans have. We all take delight in fun and pleasurable activities. Playing games is no exception.

Yes, others may argue that they dislike video games. But that's where the misconception occurs. Gamification is not simply about playing games. Instead, it channels the art (and science) of gameplay into non-gaming environments through the use of game mechanics.

The right use of specific game elements can trigger the release of feel-good brain chemicals such as dopamine and serotonin. Think of these as natural booster shots that lift our moods and help us stay motivated on a task.

As such, the problem to address isn't whether gamification will appeal to your specific type of learner. The real question is, how can you plan the right gamification approach to suit your target users?

**Tip:** Before creating your gamification strategy, you should get to know your audience. What are their motivations? What are their preferred ways of learning? Align your game mechanics with their learning journey. Different game elements can work for different types of learners. It's all about choosing the right ones!

### Objection 4: Gamification does not align with our company brand or culture

This objection holds that gamification can only work well in a specific sector or context. For example, some insist that it is only suitable within the education field or in companies with a fun workplace culture.

Other companies fear that it would water down the professional or serious feel of their brand.

While we can indeed associate gamification with fun and games, the approach is much broader than that. Just as there are countless games out there to appeal to different players, there are also many different ways to implement gamification.

Being one of the most prevailing objections, we wanted to discuss this issue further. As such, the next section of this guidebook will walk you through how to make your gamification approach more professional or suitable for different types of audiences.

Gamification will continue to be adopted by organisations across a variety of industries. This not only includes the retail and education sector but also IT, banking, the public sector and even the military.

While the approach may vary, there is one thing that is constant. There will always be room for exciting and effective ways to tailor gamification for your brand or business!

**Tip:** Before gamifying a process or a programme, consider the unique elements of your company's brand or culture. From there, you can pick your mechanics and design your approach accordingly. For more tips, you can check out our article on how gamification improves company culture.<sup>94</sup>

## Objection 5: Gamification is a form of trickery that manipulates human behaviour

This argument claims that gamification manipulates user behaviour. It tricks employees into doing tasks through deceptive or underhand mechanics. As addressed in previous objections, we can implement gamification in different ways. While some companies utilise it to promote positive exchanges, others may exploit it at the expense of their employees.

However, such exploitation isn't an intrinsic flaw of gamification. It's a misuse of the approach.

The Octalysis Framework, also discussed later in this guidebook, provides a detailed description of the positive and negative drivers of human motivation.

It classifies them as white hat and black hat drivers. Black hat drivers can trigger negative emotions such as rage, frustration or disappointment. But they can also be useful to create urgency.

White hat drivers, on the other hand, create positive feelings such as purpose, mastery or autonomy.

As such, it all boils down to approaching gamification responsibly and with your employees' best interests in mind.

**Tip:** You can choose to focus on specific game elements that would minimise or eliminate negative learner emotions. For instance, Levels effectively tap into a white hat driver, which is a learner's desire for progress and advancement.

## Objection 6: Gamification lacks originality — it's just XP, Badges and Leaderboards!

Some critics of gamification would say that it's a limited one-size-fits-all approach that lacks flexibility.

They would note that the standard gamification package always consists of the same, easy and overused game mechanics. This approach lacks novelty and will eventually bore learners into submission and fail to yield any long-term benefits.

However, gamification in itself should not be blamed but rather poor gamification design. With countless ways of gamifying an initiative, it's easy for innovation and originality to thrive.

Here at Growth Engineering, our gamified systems offer trademark features that go beyond Points and Leaderboards.

For example, our Streaks feature offers rewards for a set of activities completed during a specific period. This can help reinforce daily engagements within your online gamified platform or mobile app.

The use of Battles is another mechanic that can further excite your users. This enables player-vs-player knowledge quizzes. By combining social learning and gamification, you can create a highly incentivised training environment.

There are many other game mechanics you can use to drive consistent engagement among your users. The only limit is your imagination. Don't hesitate to get creative when designing your gamification plan!

**Tip:** Design your gamified system with a healthy mix of different mechanics, innovation, and good judgement. Take your guide from the best gamified case studies.<sup>95</sup> When setting up a learning management system, here are more gamified features worth considering!<sup>96</sup>

## Objection 7: Gamification is a short-term concept that only generates superficial engagement

This objection suggests that a gamified approach cannot produce long-term results. Critics argue that, like many games, game mechanics have limited appeal.

Over time, users will become less interested in the mechanics designed to drive activity. As this happens, engagement levels will decline, and the results will start to dry up.

Oftentimes, this misconception stems from a misguided approach to gamification.

*"Got a high employee turnover rate? Need to increase referrals? Address low performance scores? Let's add more game mechanics!"*

Naturally, this approach is bound to fail if companies see gamification as a solution to underlying business problems.

Gamification should not mask the symptoms of a broken system. Nor should companies implement it without a proper strategy on how it can sustain user interest in the long term.

In fact, research shows that a well-designed gamification strategy can sustain user interest over time.

A longitudinal study conducted over the course of three years by Karl Kapp demonstrates this.<sup>97</sup> In the sample, the impact of elements such as Leaderboards and rewards continued to have a positive effect on users.

**Tip:** Don't gamify a system without getting to the root cause of the problem you're trying to solve. It also helps to define specific game elements that tap into long-term motivations. For example, a Scorecard fuels learners' desire for personal growth.

## Objection 8: Gamification requires too much time and effort to set up

Many organisations claim that they can't afford the resources or costs associated with setting up a gamified system. Neither can they afford to overhaul an existing business model with a gamified one.

Similarly, other businesses get discouraged by the perceived complexity of managing a gamified system.

If you are considering gamification for your organisation, you don't have to support it with sophisticated game mechanics. Likewise, there is no need to power it with the most expensive software.

You could start by implementing gamification within your existing tools or approaches. What's more, if you're looking for online solutions (such as a learning management system), be sure to get the right gamified platform to help save on costs in the long run.

Here at Growth Engineering, our cost-effective and gamified systems simplify and automate the whole engagement process for you. For example, Growth Engineering Authoring Tool can help you easily create and share gamified training content.

**Tip:** You do not need to go overboard with your game mechanics. Simple but meaningful game mechanics such as Experience Points and Badges can be a great addition to your training programme. For more guidance, our 43 gamification tips are guaranteed to get you started!<sup>98</sup>

## Objection 9: There is no proof that gamification will work

This objection claims that there is no proof that gamification actually works. But existing research and case studies prove otherwise.

In fact, Texas bank Extraco used a gamified process to raise customer acquisitions by a whopping 700%.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, gamification has been proven to increase productivity by up to 50%.<sup>100</sup>

However, gamification can also go wrong when organisations fail in the planning and implementation stages. In fact, a Gartner report concludes that 80% of gamified applications fail to meet business objectives due to poor design.<sup>101</sup>

To avoid being part of this statistic, here are some questions to consider:

- What is the business goal behind the gamified activity?
- How will you test and measure its success? Who are your users?
- What game mechanics should you select to motivate them?
- What potential risks could arise throughout the whole gamification process?

One successful case study comes from GAME Digital<sup>102</sup>, the UK's leading high-street video games retailer. The company wanted to achieve better results in their training programme. As such, they used Growth Engineering LMS as the framework for their learning platform.

They called their system GAME Learning Zone. This is a learning management system packed with game features such as XP, Levels and Leaderboards.

The programme proved to be a great success almost immediately. It quickly engaged GAME's learner audience and content completion rates soon soared to 89%.

In turn, this generated a 94.3% uplift in the average customer basket. Gamification had a large role to play in achieving these incredible results.

**Tip:** What distinguishes an effective gamification programme from a poor one is its capacity to drive behaviour change. Design your game mechanics with this in mind. The Fogg Behaviour Model is one good framework you can follow to help you achieve optimum outcomes!

## Objection 10: Gamification is hard to measure (unlike traditional methods of training)

Critics are often quick to dismiss gamification as being hard to measure. In their heads, they may be thinking: *“how in the world can one assess business impact using game points, badges and leaderboards?”*.

As with any other initiative, when you implement a gamification programme, you need to set up clear goals and metrics to help you assess success.

Your gamified approach should have a clearly defined ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’. It should also align with your company’s mission and the needs of your audience.

Another important step is to always be mindful of the needs of your employees throughout the whole process. For example, it helps to conduct qualitative research to assess the interaction and engagement of users.

You will also benefit from periodically rolling out new features to sustain novelty and interest.

As such, the essence of measuring gamification is no different to traditional approaches.

Like other initiatives, gamification strategies must link to well-defined goals and metrics. These strategies must also be regularly updated to keep up with the evolving needs of your organisation and employees.

**Tip:** Be selective when choosing the right metrics to assess performance.<sup>103</sup> More metrics means more data to collect and processing requirements to generate. What’s more, be sure to measure the performance of your game mechanics at every point of your learners’ journey. You should cover three key stages<sup>104</sup>: adoption, usage and engagement.

## Final Words

Most of these common objections stem from hasty assumptions and a misguided view of the use of gamification in a business context.

But gamification as an approach should not be blamed for poor results. Rather, this is often a natural consequence of misaligned objectives, poor design and faulty implementation. What’s more, gamification should not be considered a solution to a broken system.

The next section of this guidebook will help you to ensure you comprehend your audience’s needs while creating a fully-fledged, professional gamification strategy that proves all the sceptics wrong!



# HOW TO MAKE GAMIFICATION ON YOUR LMS MORE PROFESSIONAL

The word 'gamification' can have playful connotations that may sound incongruent with the word 'professional'. However, that couldn't be further from the truth.

A learning professional will often use gamification to create more engaging learning experiences. It works well because it appeals to humans' most basic needs, such as a sense of autonomy and competence.

Consequently, the use of gamification in training has been shown to cause a 60% increase in employee engagement.<sup>105</sup>

It's not all just fun and games (pun intended). It's a professional way for organisations to take their training to the next level.

In this section, we will walk you through the different ways you can apply gamification across your learning systems in *a professional way*.

Without further ado, let's get going!

## How Do Users Feel About Gamification?

Well, that depends on who you ask. A 2017 study with 10,499 participants found that gamification has a positive impact.<sup>106</sup> It showed that gamification can effectively motivate learners into action and promote long-lasting engagement.

However, other studies show the importance of context and a targeted approach when rolling out a gamified solution.

For gamification to work, you need to adopt a strategic approach. After all, you can't just throw Badges, XP and Leaderboards at your engagement problem and hope for the best.

Instead, you need to ask and answer certain questions before you select your approach. We like to call these the 5 Ws:

- **Who** is the intended learner audience? Different groups of people will have different attitudes, motivations and time restrictions.

- **Why** are you creating the training programme? In other words, what's your learning objective, and how will your learners benefit from it?
- **What** behaviours are you trying to drive? These are things like collaborative learning and increased communication.
- **When** do you want users to engage with your learning platform? Whilst at work or at home?
- **Which** mechanics are most likely to appeal to your specific audience? Certain game elements will be more likely to incite engagement and have a lasting impact.

You need to select appropriate mechanics for your audience. Otherwise, your gamified training programme won't succeed. This lack of alignment has led to gamification getting a bad reputation, especially in professional environments.

For example, our fun peer-vs-peer Battles work as they tap into your learners' competitive nature. But if you're working with a group of learners who don't have a competitive nature, then this part of the programme will be ineffective.

To help hone in on the best game mechanics for your organisation, it can be helpful to start with a test group. With pilots, you can implement a wide range of game mechanics. You can then gradually refine them based on what works successfully for your learners.

## Why Does Gamification Still Have Detractors?

Despite the clear benefits of a professional gamification strategy, it still has a mixed reputation. Unfortunately, many of the same prejudices that are lobbied against video games or gamers are often pinned on gamification as well.

Some see it as an unsophisticated solution. Others believe it suits a younger audience better. However, it's no longer just young people who enjoy games.

In fact, games are a major part of the cultural fabric of the modern world. Gamers make up over 2.7 billion of the world's population.<sup>107</sup> This helps to explain why the average age of gamers has now reached 35-years-old.<sup>108</sup>

What's more, eLearning Industry found that 97% of employees *above* the age of 45 agree that gamification would help improve work.<sup>109</sup>

Not to mention, today's workforce is well acquainted with social media. Learning systems like LMSs replicate social environments where learners can interact with each other. This appeals to the human need to interact with others and seek peer-based approval.

## Seven Tips to Create a Professional Gamification Strategy on Your Learning Technology Solution

So, we all know now what gamification is, how it works and what the benefits are. We've also dismissed some common misconceptions about gamification.

The next question is this: how can you apply gamification to your learning environment in a professional manner to drive real results?

### 1. Focus Your Game Mechanics Around a Wider Goal

All training programmes should start with a clear goal in place. For instance, this could be an increase in product knowledge or better onboarding of new employees.

Setting clear and measurable goals from the get-go will help you to select the most appropriate game mechanics.

For instance, if you are launching a sales training programme, you may lean heavily on Leaderboards. After all, salespeople tend to be a naturally competitive bunch.

You should also ensure your training programme is brimming with Epic Meaning. To do this, you need to create a training programme that links to your mission, values and overall vision.

Ensure your learners understand where they fit and what the benefits will be for them if they complete the associated content. This will help to motivate your learners into action and improve engagement rates.

A great example of this is one of our clients, Hard Rock Cafe. Their level structure started at *'Level 1: Shower Singer'* and went all the way up to *'Level 10: Rock Legend!'*.

This ensured that learners' personal development was linked to the company and reminded them they are part of a wider team.

### 2. Design the Gamification to Fit Your Brand

Many gamification solutions are customisable, so you can create an environment that maps neatly onto your brand specifications.

You can personalise your programme to include company colours, logos, names and more. This helps to make learners feel more comfortable and at home within their learning environment.

But this doesn't mean you need to go all out! For instance, you don't have to utilise cartoonish imagery or wild colours just because you're using game mechanics.

Make sure to keep your personalised elements in line with your audience's needs and characteristics.

### 3. Track Learner Progress with Reports

Evaluating your learners' progress is an important part of the process. Badges and XP are all well and good, but how do you know if your training is making a real impact?

You need to make sure that your programme is effective and that it is generating a return on investment (ROI). A learning management system, like Growth Engineering LMS, allows you to see how learners are performing and provide real-time feedback.

A recent report found that 89% of managers agree that ongoing feedback and check-ins have a positive impact on their organization.<sup>110</sup>

You should also use Levels and Progress Bars to help indicate where your learners are in their training journey. This helps to motivate learners into action and gives you an understanding of how their development is advancing.

### 4. Ensure Your Game Mechanics are Suited to Your Audience

Different audiences will have different wants and needs. Whether you're rolling out training for employees, partners, customers, members or other groups, it's important to select the game mechanics that will work best for your learning ecosystem.

If you don't design your gamified training programme to suit your audience, you could end up disengaging them.

This has a serious real-world impact. In fact, a 2017 study of 1,500 respondents showed that disengaged employees cost companies between \$450 and \$550 billion a year.<sup>111</sup>

For a corporate environment, game mechanics like XP and Levels provide a sense of progression and moving up the ladder. You should also encourage your learners to explore optional content within the learning library at their own pace.

This fuels a sense of autonomy and gives them an opportunity to earn bonus XP and Badges, while improving their knowledge even further.

## 5. Keep Weighting Consistent

It's vital that learners feel that their rewards match their efforts. To help achieve this, you should categorise different actions into different bands based on their difficulty.

For example, a 'Bronze' band could include actions that take less than two minutes to complete and may be worth 10XP. A 'Gold' band, on the other hand, could include actions that are considerably harder and could earn a learner 100XP.

When XP earned from actions completed is consistent with the energy input, it increases motivation levels and encourages the release of neurotransmitters.<sup>112</sup>

Weighting should also be consistent across the platform to keep your learners engaged. With more traditional learners, it often helps to imagine and promote XP as a type of currency. This gives your learners a subconscious cue about how important each action is.

## 6. Provide Real-World Context For Your Gamified Training

There's not much point in including content that doesn't apply to learners' actual jobs. Learning without real-world context often leads to disengagement and a lack of business impact.

Gamification allows real situations to be replicated and it puts learners' skills to the test before they have to use them on the job.

For example, you can design curricula that include videos to watch, different classroom sessions (virtual or in person) to sign up for and assessments to take.

You can then configure these curricula to include Awards on passing. The Awards earned are then displayed in learners' Badge Cabinets. Therefore, learners can easily check back and see all the bases that have been covered before heading into the real world. Awards can also be linked to a PDF certificate.

As a result of relevant training, companies can see a 37% increase in productivity and a 21% increase in revenue.<sup>113</sup>

## 7. Link Virtual Awards to Real Rewards

Many game mechanics provide learners with intrinsic motivation to complete actions on their learning platform. But you could also incorporate extrinsic rewards within your gamified training programme.

For instance, earning a pre-set number of Badges could entitle you to company-branded items, a charitable donation or some other tangible reward.

On Growth Engineering LMS, we use the Reward Centre to facilitate the exchange of virtual Badges and XP for real-world rewards. This provides learners with an extra layer of motivation and helps to increase engagement.

Better still, a survey by LinkedIn found that 94% of employees would be more willing to stay at a company that invested in their training.<sup>114</sup>

You should also celebrate these achievements outside of the training programme. It's important to highlight top performers in things like team meetings or internal newsletters. This helps to improve productivity and job satisfaction.

In a survey involving 200,000 people, appreciation was selected as the most influential factor for happiness at work.<sup>115</sup>

You can even take it further than that! For example, one of our clients hosts an annual awards ceremony where they hand out real awards to the best performers!



## Final Word

Gamification is taking the online learning world by storm. Its market size is predicted to keep growing and reach a global value of \$30.7 billion by 2025.<sup>116</sup> It's no wonder that companies are looking for professional gamification strategies to implement in their LMSs!

Gamification will work on your learning platform if you take the time to think things through properly. You should start by considering your audience. What are their wants and needs? How can you motivate them into action? Is there anything likely to put them off?

Once you've achieved this, you should strive to create a gamified training programme that is clearly laid out, consistent and easy to track. If you are able to achieve all this, success should surely follow.



# 10 POWERFUL EXAMPLES OF GAMIFICATION IN THE BUSINESS WORLD

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When gamification is done right, it can work wonders for your company's training and L&D goals.

As such, it is no wonder why many of the world's largest and most successful organisations have gamified their business operations. In turn, many of them have been blown away by the results.

So who are these powerhouse companies? What were their business challenges? And more importantly, how did they use gamification to solve them?

Without further ado, here are some of our favourite examples of gamification in the business world!

## 1. Omnicare

Omnicare is America's largest provider of pharmaceutical services for long-term care facilities.<sup>117</sup>

In 2013, the company's help desk struggled with long wait times and high abandonment rates. For this reason, the company needed a way to improve their service team's performance. They then sought to gamify their customer service procedures.

Game-based elements such as Points and Rewards were implemented to motivate their employees. A Leaderboard was used to track and highlight top performers. Achievements were recognized with Amazon gift cards and movie tickets.

Omnicare also tapped into what motivated their employees. One example was to ride on the hype of certain events which excited their team. Inspired by the 2016 Major League Baseball All-Star Game season, they built their game mechanics around this theme.<sup>118</sup>

To illustrate, each member of their tech team had "nine innings" (days) to complete a mountain of tickets. For every closed ticket, they would then score a "home run".

As a result, Omnicare saw 100% participation from its employees. In just nine days, the team achieved 19 home runs, with another "nine bases" loaded and waiting for deployment. Customer wait times were also reduced by 50%.

Without a doubt, Omnicare has truly succeeded in knocking their gamification strategy "out of the park".

## 2. L'Oréal Travel Retail

L'Oréal is the world's largest cosmetics company. They needed a better solution to train and communicate with their Beauty Advisors (BAs).

This was a challenge as these BAs are scattered across 18 countries and speak various different languages.

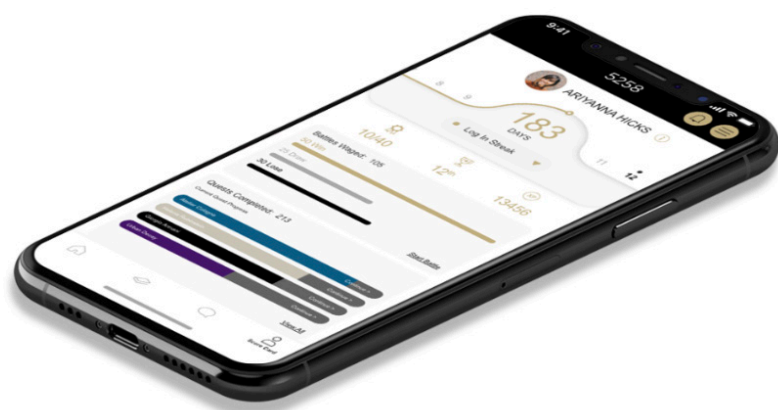
The company partnered up with Growth Engineering to build a gamified mobile application. The app would serve as a training and knowledge-sharing platform. In other words, it would enable their BAs worldwide to learn, connect and engage with each other.

The platform was customized to reflect L'Oréal's signature brand identity. Features included a newsroom, social community and a library full of microlearning content. The system also incorporated classroom management tools to help facilitate a blended learning approach.

L'Oréal created gamified bite-sized modules through the Growth Engineering Authoring Tool. As such, at any time of the day, users can log in and complete a micro-module using their hand-held devices. In turn, they accumulate Experience Points and Badges at the end of each course.

Streak notifications reinforce learning behaviours. For example, users maintain their streaks by logging in to the app at least once every day. Scorecards, on the other hand, offer real-time snapshots of their progress. What's more, the use of Battles stirs up further excitement.

As a result, L'Oréal surpassed its initial training and ROI targets within the first ten months of launch.<sup>119</sup> And these numbers continue to climb! Thanks to gamification, the company continues to exceed its engagement and learning targets.



### 3. FreshDesk

FreshDesk is a cloud-based customer support software by Freshworks.<sup>120</sup> Their leadership team wanted to increase the productivity of their customer service agents.

As such, they launched the FreshDesk Arcade within the FreshDesk platform in 2012. It employed gamification elements designed to bring the fun back into customer support. They now had a tool to help boost their staff's enthusiasm and engagement on the job.

Mundane tasks were turned into exciting quests with the help of XP, Badges and rewards. The Leaderboard recognised top-performing sales agents. It also identified those that needed a bit more guidance.

Through gamification, the company saw a clear transformation in employee attitudes. Their customer service agents also displayed higher levels of engagement. Altogether, managers saw their customer service teams become more efficient and effective.

The result? FreshDesk successfully saw an increase in staff productivity and happier customers. In fact, FreshDesk Arcade had received rave reviews from approximately 2,500 clients.

Interest has also spread quickly to the rest of their 17,000 customers. By the end of the year, FreshDesk tripled its client base to over 3,000 businesses in 77 countries. It also generated an astounding 1,000% increase in revenue.

### 4. Hendrick Automotive Group

Hendrick Automotive Group is an automotive dealership with over 10,000 employees throughout the United States.<sup>121</sup>

They needed a way to effectively manage and deliver a blended learning initiative. It was clear that an online solution was needed to stand any chance of success.

The company launched Hendrick Automotive Learning Online, or H.A.L.O, in 2015. This platform was built on the Growth Engineering LMS framework. It was a fully branded learning management system jam-packed with gamification features.

Users progressed through Levels and earned Badges after completing a learning module. They also earned Badges when they shared or suggested articles to their colleagues. Themed competitions also stirred up excitement and helped keep engagement levels up.

Since H.A.L.O's launch, engagement on the platform has increased significantly. In fact, it has been used eight times more by employees than their previous online learning solution.

### 5. Topps Tiles

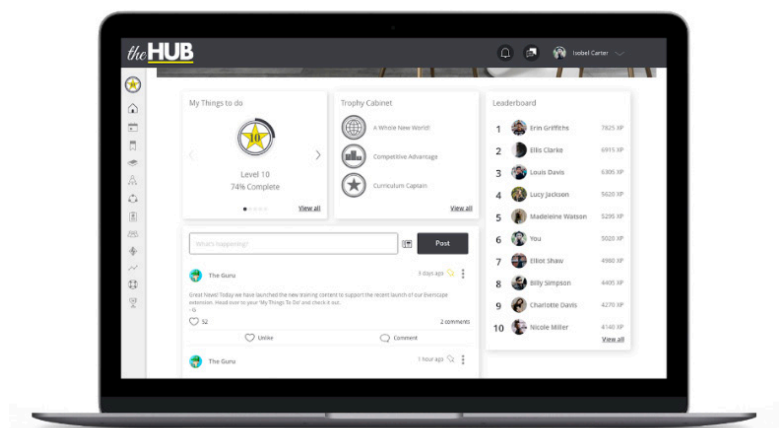
Topps Tiles is the UK's leading tile specialist with over 370 stores nationwide. Their L&D team needed a highly engaging LMS to replace their old-fashioned learning platform that was starting to show signs of wear and tear.

They partnered with Growth Engineering to create Topps Tiles Academy.<sup>122</sup> This gamified learning management system utilised Badges, Levels and Leaderboards to produce some impressive results.

The platform also utilised a bounty of social features to help cultivate a genuine learning community. Learners across the platform even interacted with an admin-controlled character called 'The Guru'. This character provided learners with useful information, tips and best practice advice.

Within the first week of the platform's launch, more than half of their total number of employees had logged on and engaged with the LMS.

In the six months following its launch, users averaged four and a half pieces of voluntary training content. This showed that employees were logging in, engaging with content and coming back to learn more!



## 6. T-Mobile

T-Mobile is one of the largest telco companies in Europe and the United States.

As their products and services grew more complex, managing customers became more challenging. It was clear that they needed to ramp up their customer service in order to keep their consumers happy.

To solve this problem, they created T-Community in 2011.<sup>123</sup> This was a social business platform that aimed to help customer care representatives to learn and collaborate with each other.

Gamified elements were added to the platform to increase participation. As such, members earned XP and Badges for certain activities. These included reviewing training materials, answering questions or liking content. A leaderboard allowed them to compare their performance and rankings with other colleagues.

Within a span of six weeks, T-Mobile awarded 187,000 achievement badges within the platform. They also saw a staggering 1,000% increase in learner participation. In fact, more than 15,000 frontline employees completed missions in the first two weeks.

This increased engagement from participants was also reflected in their customer satisfaction scores. On top of this, resolution rates began to climb month-on-month. And it's all thanks to gamification!

## 7. EE

EE is the UK's largest mobile network operator in the UK. It services 30 million customers and is the largest operator of 4G services in Europe.

They needed a training platform that would improve their staff's digital skills and compliance performance. To do this, they wanted a highly engaging and accessible solution for their 25,000+ staff.

Enter gamification. They teamed up with Growth Engineering to create 'The Digital Academy', a social and gamified learning portal.<sup>124</sup> It provides learners with micro-courses that they can complete in their own time.

Learners can also access game-based quizzes to test their knowledge. The use of Badges, Levels and Leaderboards further increase their staff's engagement levels.

As a result, knowledge assessment scores average an incredible 99%. What's more, 92% of EE staff agree that the gamified platform has increased their digital skills.

Through the 'The Digital Academy', EE has achieved their training objectives with flying colours.

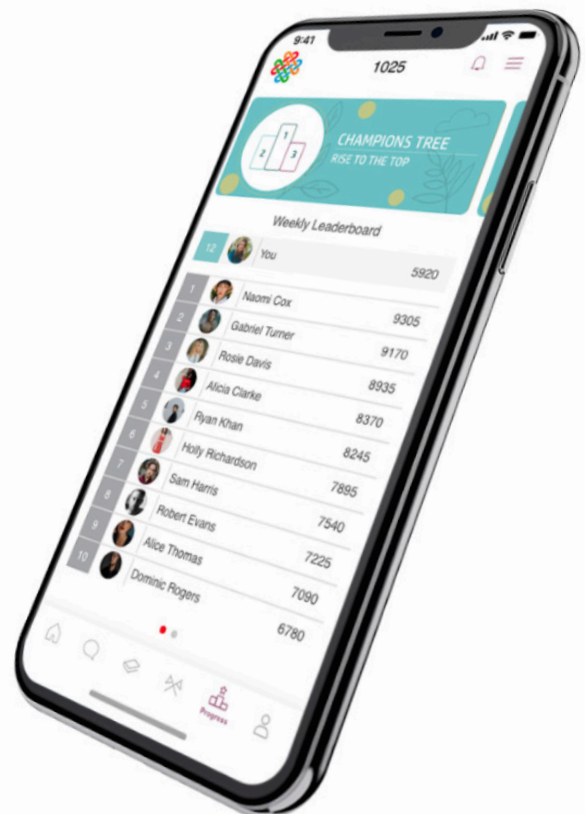
## 8. HP

HP is one of the world's biggest tech brands. They serve more than one billion customers in more than 170 countries across six continents.

Given their size and tech leadership, HP needed their sales teams to be on top of their game. That's why they partnered with Growth Engineering to create a mobile app called the HP Uni App.<sup>125</sup> This was built on the Growth Engineering Learning App framework.

The purpose of the app was to train sales teams on cybersecurity topics. To help achieve this, the app used gamification to maximise learner engagement.

The team built the game mechanics around the chance to win 'The HP Security Cup'. They delivered the learning campaign in a league format. It had three rounds and two divisions.



Sales members engaged in knowledge Battles and winners rose up the Leaderboard. Users also earned XP by completing microlearning modules. These were custom-made to fit with their busy sales schedules.

As a result, learner engagement skyrocketed to never before seen levels. The app received an average of 84 logins and 6.1 microunit completions per user, per month. This surpassed HP's learning targets and delighted their leadership team!

## 9. Deloitte Leadership Academy

The Deloitte Leadership Academy (DLA) is an online executive training programme for more than 50,000 Deloitte employees based in more than 150 countries worldwide.<sup>126</sup>

The DLA platform utilises powerful gamification mechanics to drive engagement and user behaviour. Users earn Badges and other rewards after completing missions and displaying desired behaviours.

Learners' rankings are also showcased on the Leaderboard. This reinforced healthy competition with other colleagues. Users were also given autonomy to customise their own learning goals.

As a result, DLA content was completed 75% faster than it had been with their previous solution. The platform also saw a 47% increase in return visitors on a daily basis.

Thanks to their gamified training approach, Deloitte are able to deliver engaging learning experiences for thousands of employees across the world. Mission accomplished!

## 10. Microsoft

Microsoft is the largest software company in the world. They too saw great value in gamifying their business operations.<sup>127</sup>

A few years back, their Testing Division faced a specific business challenge. The team needed to conduct routine tests which required employees to hand over their machines overnight. However, this proved to be a difficult task as employees hesitated to cooperate.

As such, the division saw gamification as the perfect tool to help their members overcome this hurdle. Their broader aim was also to promote corporate citizenship for the company's entire workforce

Their initial use of gamification was simple. They created a hang-man style game linked to testing one machine each night. A competitive Leaderboard tracked the progress of each team member

As a result, the division saw an increase in engagement among its members. With the help of gamification, this led to a 400% boost in system checks

Similarly, Leaderboards encouraged Microsoft's users to give regular feedback. This capitalised on their users' desire for acknowledgement and their competitive nature. For example, players rose up on the leaderboard each time they reported a bug on the system.

The organisation also sought to create Epic Meaning for their users. Microsoft linked players' game scores to real-world donations to their five partner charities. This gave users a sense of purpose, linked to the chance to contribute towards a greater good.

As a result, the company saw user feedback increase by 1600%. What's more, charities received thousands of dollars from Microsoft. Thanks to gamification, Microsoft was able to achieve its business goals.

## Final Words

There we go! These 10 examples are an excellent showcase of the power gamification can have if it's done right.

All of these organisations implemented game mechanics after identifying specific issues. Only then could they understand the right approach for their audience and tailor their strategy accordingly.

But it's not always easy! As such, the next section of this guidebook walks you through how to use the Octalysis Framework to guide your gamification strategies.



# USING THE OCTALYSIS FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE YOUR GAMIFICATION STRATEGIES

As we know by now, gamification works because it taps into the neuroscience of effective learning. As such, the right game mechanics can successfully drive deeper learner motivations. This, in turn, is what creates real and long-lasting engagement for your training programme.

But what exactly are these motivations? And what game mechanics can you use to elicit the right reactions from your learners? That is where the Octalysis Framework comes in handy.

## Yu-kai Chou's Octalysis Framework

The Octalysis Framework is an award-winning gamification design framework developed by Yu-kai Chou.<sup>128</sup>

Yu-kai Chou is considered to be a true gamification pioneer. He wanted to develop a framework that explained the various systems that made games fun.

From his research, he realised that games engage us because they tap into specific core drivers inherent within all of us. These drives are what motivate us to act and commit to certain activities.

He also found that various techniques can drive us in different directions. Some mechanics motivate us in a positive or inspirational way.

On the other hand, some mechanics can be more deceptive or can help to fuel more obsessive behaviours.

Yu-kai Chou then drilled down on what these different motivations are. This led to the creation of the Octalysis Framework, an octagon-shaped model bearing eight core drivers.

## The Eight Core Drivers

The Octalysis Framework presents eight key motivators of human behaviour. Every action that we do stems from one or more of these core drivers. Without the presence of at least one of them, we will not be motivated or driven to act.

- **Epic Meaning & Calling** – This is a core drive that guides us to seek a higher purpose or meaning beyond our personal goals.
- **Development & Accomplishment** – We are driven to take on challenges that help us to achieve our goals. This drive also pushes us to work harder to improve our skills and see ourselves progress.
- **Creative Expression & Feedback** – This core drive explains why we seek activities to learn and express ourselves in a creative way. This is the drive that lets us take delight in “play”, as we immerse ourselves in the joy of the activity itself. Receiving feedback also fuels this creative process, as it helps us apply more ideas and new ways of expressing ourselves.
- **Ownership** – This driver comes into effect when we come to possess something and believe that we own it. This taps into our natural desire to take pride in the things we own and acquire more possessions
- **Social Influence & Relatedness** – *Social influence* relates to our inherent need to seek mentors, get approval from others and find companionship. This also taps into our competitive nature and relative status with others. *Relatedness* refers to our desire to connect with social groups and individuals with whom we share common interests.
- **Scarcity & Impatience** – We’ve all been there. We always want what we can’t have. This is the drive that makes us yearn for something simply because it is rare, exclusive or difficult to obtain right away.
- **Unpredictability & Curiosity** – We are hard-wired to seek thrill in uncertainty. Our brain’s reward centre lights up when we encounter novel and unexpected sensations. This explains our love for surprises and our desire to seek out new experiences.
- **Loss & Avoidance** – This core drive is our natural aversion to losing things we have worked hard to obtain. It also explains our desire to minimise potential loss or risks wherever and whenever we can.

## Applying the Octalysis Framework

The Octalysis Framework is a powerful guide to show us how we can tap into the different motivational drives of our employees. Now we’ll show you how to use this framework to create the most effective gamified training programme!

## Core Drive #1: Create Epic Meaning With Exciting Quests & Rewards

Before creating your training programme, take time to understand your learners.

What are their values? What activities make them feel that they're part of a bigger purpose? And how would they like to express this?

Taking the time to do this will enable you to design the right learning content. You should also be able to identify what game elements will best appeal to your learners. A training needs analysis can help you with this.

The next step is to design your gamified LMS or mobile learning app with the right game elements.

One way to engage users is by incorporating a gripping narrative into your training courses. According to a Nielsen report, storytelling engages our minds much more than cold, hard facts.<sup>129</sup>

You can do this by transforming dull learning modules into exciting quests and meaningful challenges. To generate maximum Epic Meaning, these challenges should align with your learners' noblest aspirations and tie to your organisational mission, values and philosophy.

You can generate further Epic Meaning by linking your learning programme to real-world rewards that enable your employees to contribute to a higher good.

Points or Badges that learners have earned can be used to benefit a social cause.

For instance, you can tie these rewards to charitable donations or corporate sustainability efforts.

If you follow these steps, you'll end up with a training programme that oozes Epic Meaning. And with that in place, learner engagement will soon follow.

## Core Drive #2: Celebrate Accomplishments With Points, Badges & Scorecards

Driving productivity in the workplace is why organisations invest in a training programme in the first place. One of the primary drivers of productivity are employees who are motivated by their desire to get things done. This desire leads to increased job satisfaction, which boosts productivity by 6.6%!<sup>130</sup>

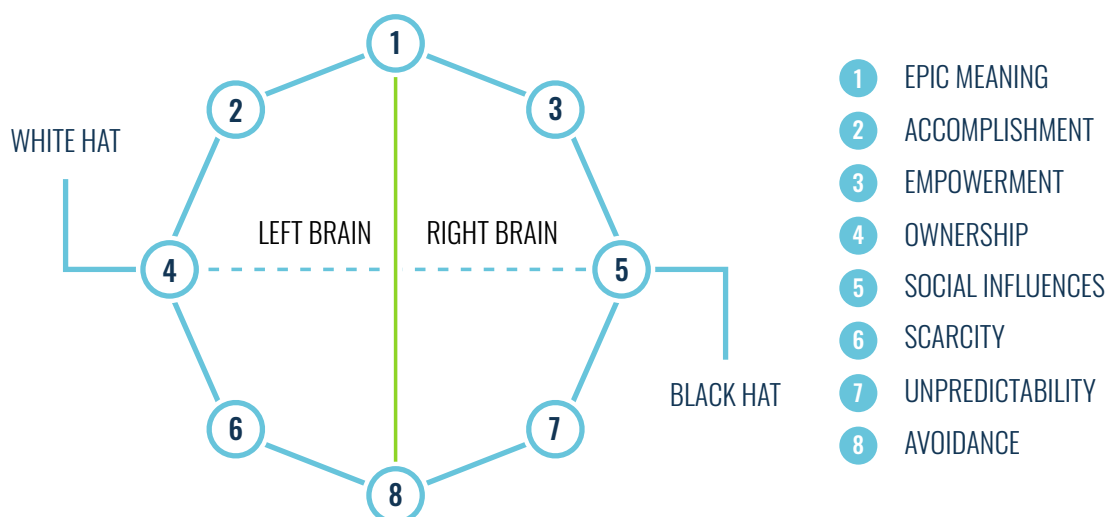
This is one of gamification's key focuses. Game elements, such as XP, reinforce a learner's sense of accomplishment. This, in turn, fuels their desire to achieve more.

Learners can also earn and collect Badges upon the completion of desired learning modules or in-platform actions.

Progress bars are also an excellent way of tapping into this drive. They serve as a real-time guide on how far a learner has come within their online training programme. This indicator gives your employees that extra push they may need to finish desired actions within their training modules.

Lastly, Scorecards lets learners keep track of all their achievements. This gives them the ability to easily track and take pride in their accomplishments. This keeps them motivated to keep on achieving!

## The Octalysis Framework



### Core Drive #3: Stimulate Creative Expression & Feedback With Levels, Clubs & Quizzes

Hone in on your employee's drive to create, innovate and express their individuality. A study conducted by IBM shows that CEOs regard creativity as the most crucial factor for success.<sup>131</sup>

You can apply this in your training approach by enabling your learners to customise their learning journeys. Levels offer customised training pathways that let users shape their own learning programmes.

Adding social functionality such as Clubs is another way of stimulating creative learning. Clubs are places where people who share a passion or interest gather to exchange knowledge and ideas. As a result, they can liven up a training programme by encouraging learning in a social context.

For example, you could encourage your learners to share or post what they've learned so far. This could include video testimonials, case studies, images, text and more.

Don't hesitate to unleash the creative power of your learners. By providing your employees with various ways to learn, you're tapping into their core drive for creativity and self-expression. In turn, this will motivate them to become more deeply engaged in your training programme.

Employees also want to receive feedback on their endeavours and output. Such feedback stimulates more ideas, which fuels and sustains their creative momentum.

In fact, the strength of this Core Drive is its capacity to engage your employees at all points of their training journey.

Quizzes are another tool you can use to create shorter feedback cycles. They can provide the instant feedback your employees need to deepen their understanding.

### Core Drive #4: Drive Ownership with In-Game Possessions & Customised Learning

We tend to work harder on projects or initiatives when we feel a genuine sense of ownership. This is why many companies offer stock options for their workers.

This lets employees own a piece of the company, which in turn makes them feel more committed to driving positive business outcomes. In fact, companies who have done this have reported a performance increase of 3.8% year-on-year!<sup>132</sup>

You can apply this same principle within your gamified training environment. The use of virtual or real-world rewards tap into your learners' drive to acquire possessions.

For example, Points or Badges can be exchanged for rewards that users can own. These can be in the form of virtual goods or real-world possessions that drive your learners to want to own more.

Another way to create a sense of ownership is to let your users customise their online training environment. When a user spends a lot of time personalising their learning modules, it helps to increase their buy-in with your training programme.

After all, this customisation activity represents a time investment on the part of your learners. What's more, the content will better reflect their wants and needs.

### Core Drive #5: Stir Up Social Connections & Influence With Clubs!

One of the key drivers of employee engagement are the social connections that workers have formed in their workplace. In fact, the quality of their relationships serves as one of the strongest motivators for them to stay engaged on the job.<sup>133</sup>



This stems from a basic social need to connect, learn from and influence others.

As such, having mentors and peers to offer feedback and advice is a great way of making learners feel more connected and encouraged.

Having this kind of support network creates an active social learning community for your team. In turn, your employees will thank you for it! Studies show that 87% of workers value social learning as a major component in their development.<sup>134</sup>

Here at Growth Engineering, we use Clubs across our learning technology solutions to help facilitate these connections. Within Clubs, members are able to connect with peers with similar interests or associations.

For example, they can create and share learning posts with other Club members. They can also actively provide and receive feedback on social posts.

As such, Clubs enable members to fulfil their desire for social ties and influence. What's more, this creates the best environment to build a knowledge-sharing culture throughout your organisation!

## Core Drive #6: Simulate Scarcity with Hidden Game Functionalities

The principle of scarcity tells us that something is more valuable when it is scarce or hard to obtain. In fact, it is considered to be one of the most powerful ways to persuade and motivate employees.

Similarly, you can simulate this for your training programme with certain gamification techniques. For example, you can limit training modules availability to a certain period of time. Better still, you can offer 'limited edition' Badges or bonus XP for content completed within a certain timeframe.

This activates a sense of scarcity for your learners, who are then motivated to act quickly. This can drive them to complete your "rare" training modules and, in turn, help you achieve your learning objectives.

Another way to cultivate this drive amongst your audience is to withhold certain features within your online learning environment.

For example, you could lock some content away at the end of a learning pathway. Learners would then need to progress through their pre-set Levels to reach these learning objects.

Creating social Clubs which promote a sense of exclusivity can also trigger this core drive. You could use this to incentivise certain actions. For example, completing a set of content could provide a 'membership pass' for a particular social Club.

## Core Drive #7: Inject Unpredictability & Curiosity With Gamified Micromodules

A neurological study has shown that curiosity makes our brains more open to learning. It taps into our inherent drive to discover and explore new things.<sup>135</sup>

This is what makes minigames so exciting. They often consist of quests that players can complete in a short span of time. These quests are housed within levels that come with certain challenges and surprises.



The application of micromodules to your training programme can recreate the same effect for your employees. Micromodules are bite-sized learning units packed with features to keep learners coming back for more.

They supply learners with nuggets of information designed to create and sustain anticipation. These modules typically come locked and loaded with rich media to keep learners hooked.

They inject unpredictability with the help of surprise elements such as flash rewards or the ability to unlock a secret quest.

One way to do this is by adding micromodules that can be unexpectedly unlocked and explored. This keeps your audience excited about the prospect of discovering more treasure troves of learning.

You can also incorporate unexpected rewards or badges, which learners can uncover at various points in their training journey.

## Core Drive #8: Enhance Loss Avoidance With Goal Re-Framing & Dynamic Game Elements

Learning objectives are commonly set to inform employees about what they can gain from completing their training programme. But have you ever tried reframing these goals so that they focus on what your learners stand to lose?

This drive focuses on the pain of lost opportunities. Many studies have shown how the pain of losing is psychologically more powerful than the pleasure of winning.<sup>136</sup>

You can apply this drive by letting your learners know what they'll be missing out on if they fail to complete certain activities. You can also gamify this by using Streak rewards and Leaderboards to highlight potential losses.

You may also want to create artificial pressure by using 'countdowns' within your quizzes. This presents the threat of a loss of points if learners are unable to complete a quiz in time.

Having these elements in your gamification arsenal is handy for creating a sense of urgency for your online training programme.

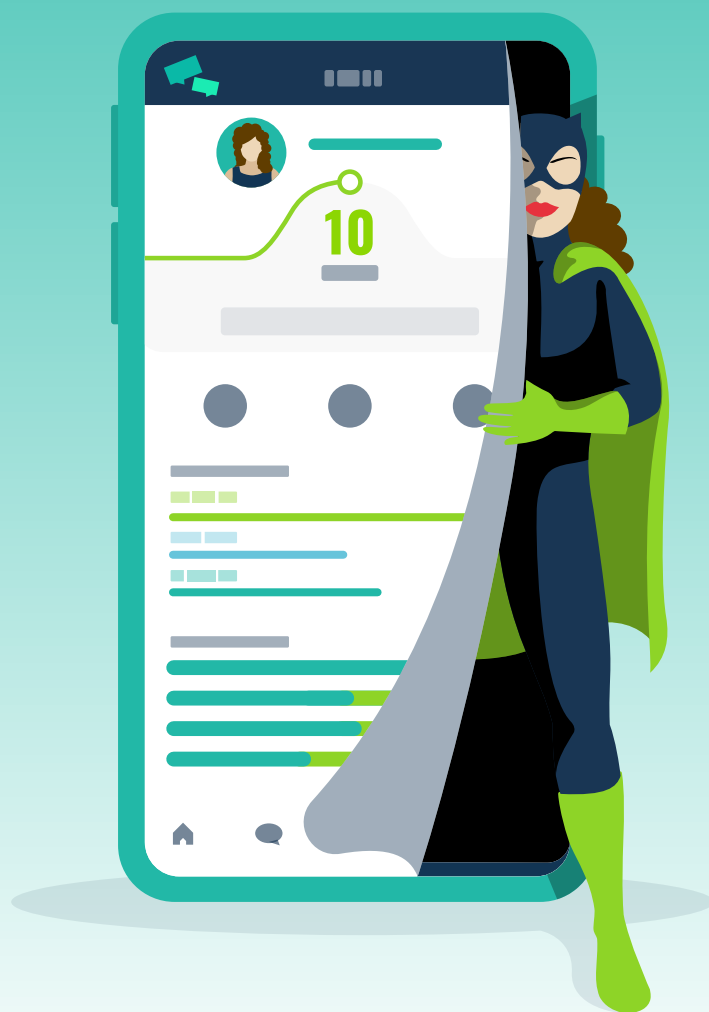
## Final Words

The Octalysis Framework shows us how we can effectively tap into learner motivations in training. The model also reveals how these eight core drivers can be grouped together to serve distinct functions.

For instance, there are core drivers that are goal-oriented, while others focus on the joy of the process itself.

All in all, the key takeaway from this framework is that all eight drivers can be utilised to benefit your learners. This can be achieved by aligning these drivers to key programme objectives, and to the right gamification techniques.

By doing so, you can create a gamified training programme that will engage your learners and deliver the best business outcomes!



# GAMIFICATION TRENDS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Gamification is no longer a buzzword. Since the term was first coined in 2002, it has continued to grow in prominence. In fact, if you examine the hard data, it suggests that gamification trends have now crossed over into the mainstream.

Today, companies worldwide are now using it to great effect to enhance user engagement and productivity. And as gamification-focused learning technology experts, we are delighted to see that 90% of survey respondents believe that gamified learning solutions are effective.<sup>137</sup>

But as the world continues to change, how will gamification evolve to fit the changing needs of today's modern learners? Has gamification reached its pinnacle? And how can you apply these trends to design better gamified programmes?

Let's explore some of the key trends that will affect the gamification space now and in the future. If you are ready, let's dive in!

## Market Trends

### 1. The Global Gamification Market Will Continue to Grow

The world will continue to see an increasing demand for gamified systems. In fact, the global gamification market is currently growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 27.4% and projected to reach \$30.7 billion by 2025.<sup>138</sup>

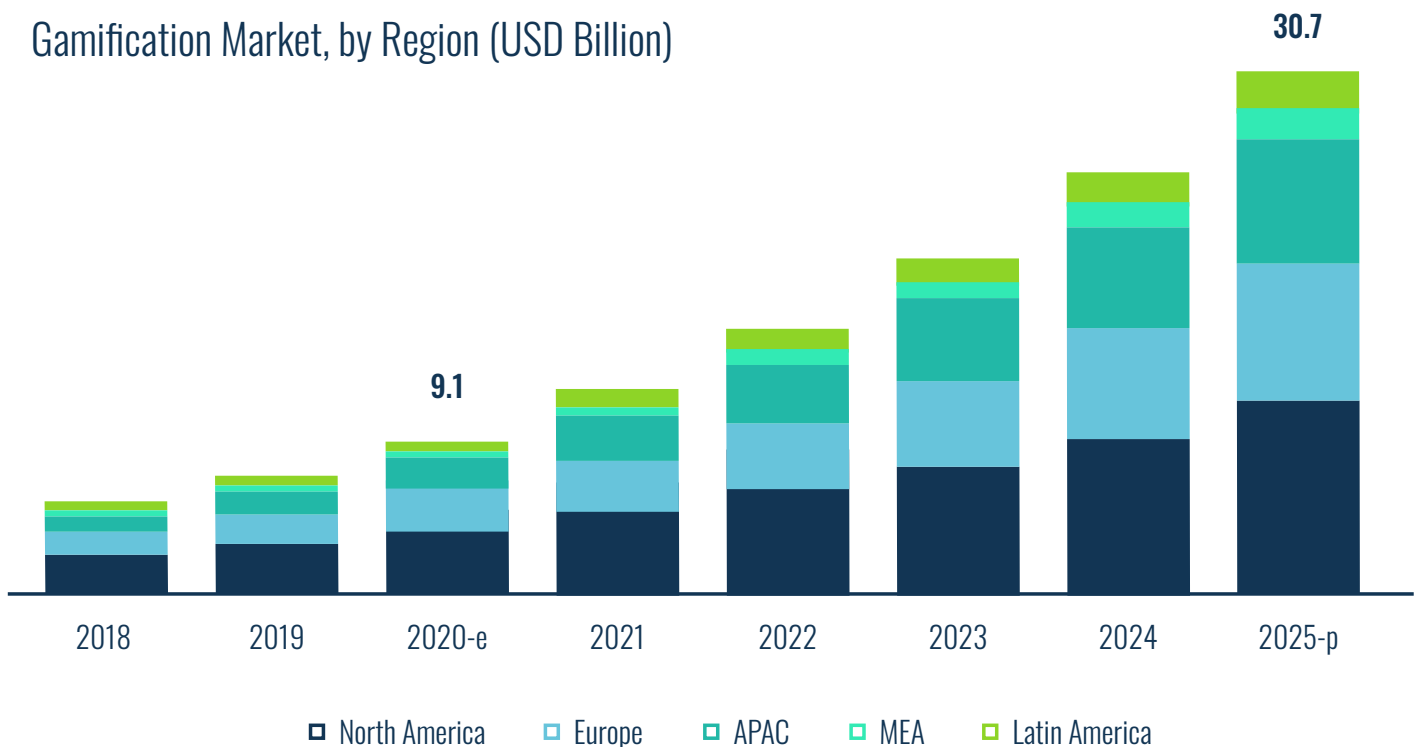
North America will continue to account for the largest share of the global gamification market for the next five years.<sup>139</sup> This will be driven by the region's dominant number of mobile internet users, with 90% of residents owning a smartphone.<sup>140</sup>

The gamification market in Europe will also develop significantly within the forecasted period. The support of local governments and key stakeholders will help to bolster this growth.

For instance, policymakers in the United Kingdom and France will host more gamification conferences and events.

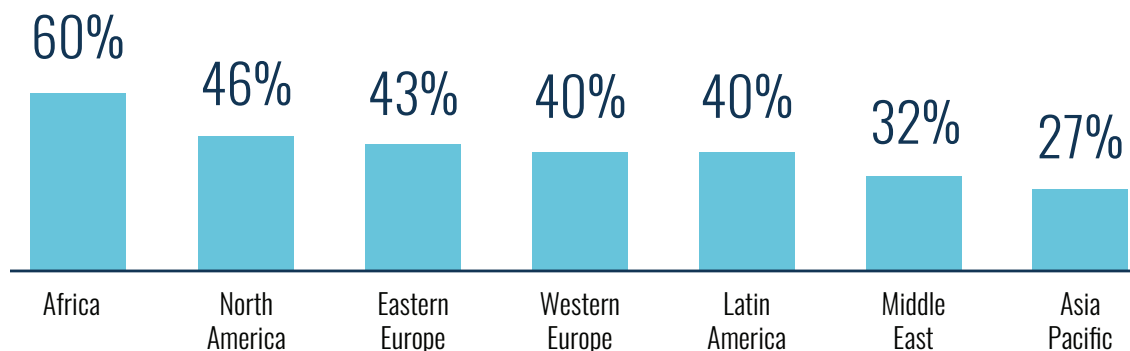
While North America and Europe will remain the largest players, other regions are catching up. Africa shall see the fastest growth rate, with gamification in the region forecasted to expand by 60.1% by 2023.

## Gamification Market, by Region (USD Billion)



Source: MarketsandMarkets Analysis

## Projected 5 Year Growth Rate of Game-based Learning Systems by Region



Source: Metaari

A large part of this rise will stem from the increase in local and regional providers of gamified solutions.

Similarly, Latin America and the Middle East will flourish as more startups adapt to gamified solutions in the continent. The rise of eLearning and game-based education in Brazil will also help boost gamification in the region.

Asia Pacific will also grow exponentially. China and India will help drive the gamification market in the region.

### 2. Large Enterprises Will Dominate the Business Sector

A Gartner report shows that gamification has now been adopted by more than 70% of businesses belonging to the Global 2000 list of companies.<sup>141</sup>

This trend will continue to grow as more organisations gamify their business operations.

Large enterprises are expected to hold the largest market share, with many of them having been early adopters of gamified software.<sup>142</sup> They are also likely to invest in more innovative gamified solutions. Companies such as Oracle, Hewlett Packard, IBM, and Google will help drive this trend.

Small businesses will also gamify their recruiting and sales activities in response to increased competition in the SME space.<sup>143</sup> We also anticipate that this sector will ramp up their use of gamification strategies through the use of social media.

### 3. The Retail & Education Sectors Will Approach Maturity

Gamification is approaching maturity in the education and enterprise retail sectors. To date, retail is the top adopter of gamified solutions, holding a 28.6% market share.<sup>144</sup>

Education follows closely as the next most popular sector.

This comes as no surprise as 80% of learners are more effective with gamified practices.<sup>145</sup> Moreover, with a whopping 97% of kids playing computer games, teachers will continue to gamify their classroom practices.<sup>146</sup>

Perhaps this is why 87% of businesses are projected to utilise gamified techniques in the next five years.<sup>147</sup> Half of these companies will also consider gamification as a top priority.

### 4. Gamification Will Expand to More Sectors

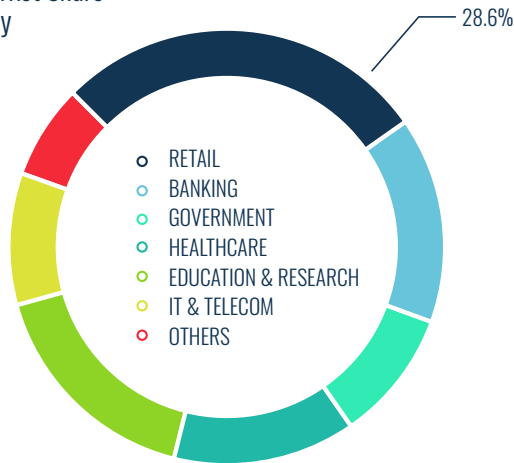
Gamification will continue to grow in popularity across a variety of industries. These include IT, banking, the public sector and even the military.

Notably, the continued boom of the IT sector over the next few years will drive the expansion of gamification throughout the industry.<sup>148</sup>

For instance, IT companies will gamify large-scale recruiting activities to streamline job applications. Recruiters will gamify virtual screenings and assessment tests to filter out and select candidates.

We will also continue to see gamification's impact in the military.<sup>149</sup> The United States Army, for example, launched a gamified platform to support its recruitment activities.<sup>150</sup> Specifically, enrollees are able to put their skills to the test and see if they have what it takes to be a soldier.

## Global Market Share by Industry



Source: Fortune Business Insights (2019)

While virtual battles cannot replace real-world combat, they proved to be a cost-effective tool in attracting more recruits.

In fact, this has driven 30% of Americans (aged 16-24 years old) to have a more positive impression of the US army at a fraction of the recruitment cost.<sup>151</sup>

## Workplace Trends

### 5. Gamification Will Drive Recruitment & Training Programmes

The COVID-19 pandemic created the need for companies to shift to fully online recruitment and training solutions. It has also become increasingly necessary to create flexible and engaging L&D programmes for remote teams.<sup>152</sup>

As such, organisations will continue to employ gamified solutions to address these challenges.

Gamified eLearning modules are helping employees to understand new processes and ways of working. Teams are also receiving real-time feedback on their learning progress thanks to game components like Levels and Scorecards.

The results speak for themselves. Over 54% of new hires report being highly productive after undergoing a gamified training programme.<sup>153</sup> Participants are also found to score 14 points higher in skill assessment tests compared to others.<sup>154</sup>

One good example would be the case of Domino's Pizza, one of the world's most popular pizza chains. In 2015, the company gamified its recruitment and upskilling processes by launching Pizza Hero.<sup>155</sup>

The initiative proved to be a roaring success. The release of the app increased sales by as much as 30%.

### 6. Key Benefits Will Be Employee Engagement & Productivity

Employee engagement has remained and will remain to be one of the top challenges facing managers today and for the foreseeable future.

To address this, companies are turning to gamification to make work more meaningful and fun for their employees.

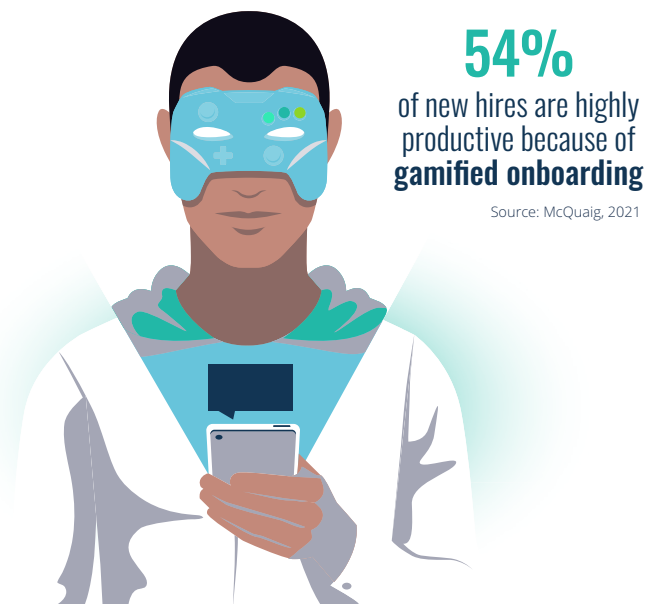
Studies show that these gamified initiatives have increased workplace engagement by 48%.<sup>156</sup> What's more, 72% of workers report feeling motivated to work harder.<sup>157</sup>

### 7. Gamification Will Support Human-Centered Design

Studies show the growing importance of human-centred design to support the needs of modern workers.<sup>158</sup> Similarly, empathetic managers are what drives 92% of employees to remain in their jobs.<sup>159</sup> As such, employee feedback is now driving the design of gamification strategies. Companies are now aligning bigger organisational objectives with their workers' values.

For instance, gamified initiatives are increasingly shaped around an employee's sense of Epic Meaning.

The previously explored Octalysis Framework will remain a useful tool for designing gamified training programmes. This framework shows the benefits of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators. It also explains the limitations of different types of incentives.



## 8. More Marketing & Sales Activities Will Be Gamified

Today's companies are gamifying their marketing activities to drive customer acquisition and retention goals.<sup>160</sup> They are using gamification to engage users across all points of the customer journey.<sup>161</sup>

### The Impact of Gamification



Source: Anadea

In fact, 93% of marketers love gamification and will continue to implement it in their campaigns.<sup>162</sup> Myntra, an Indian fashion e-commerce site, is one successful example. Back in 2019, the company gamified their app to boost brand awareness and sales for their End of Reason campaign.<sup>163</sup> The app enables users to play games in exchange for points and rewards.

It also provides information and education about current fashion trends in the market. As a result, this has enticed customers and has driven significant traffic to the app.

Within the campaign's duration, over 650,000 users have engaged with the platform.<sup>164</sup> This year, they will continue to use gamified marketing campaigns to reach 250 million more customers.<sup>165</sup>

The global retail industry is predicted to grow at a tremendous pace, thanks to a surge in e-commerce activity.<sup>166</sup> As such, we can expect more companies to enrich their online digital activities with the help of gamification.

## 9. Gamification Will Provide More Robust Data & Insights

One of the key benefits of gamified online training software is its ability to provide real-time and actionable data.

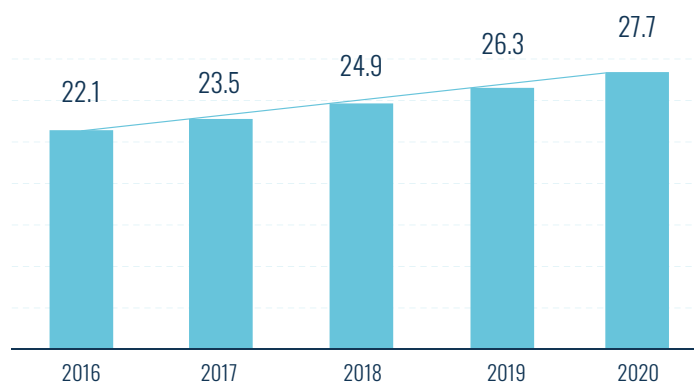
This means that companies are able to track the progress of their employees at any point in their training programme. This then allows managers to immediately make any adjustments needed for their learners.

Similarly, marketers are gleaning valuable customer insights from data enabled by their gamified platform.<sup>167</sup> This helps them better understand consumer behaviour and preferences.

Gamification analytics is also supporting product innovation. For instance, Dunkin' Donuts, one of the world's largest doughnut chains, created an online game called On Your Mark, to help collect customer insights.<sup>168</sup>

The platform invited customers to engage in online challenges in exchange for Dunkin' Donuts gift cards. This enabled the company to collect players' data and valuable consumer insights.

### Total Retail Sales, in Trillion USD, Global 2016-2020



Source: US Department of Commerce

What's more, gamification is helping support the data collection process itself. For example, scientists at Scripps Research Institute have gamified their research methods. They created Dizeez, an interactive online quiz for their scientists.<sup>169</sup>

This gamifies the process of cataloguing gene-disease associations. In turn, this has attracted more contributors. As a result, scientists have been able to pool their expertise and form new data connections to examine.

## Social Trends

### 10. Gamification Will Be Popular With Millennial Workers

Today, millennials account for 35% of our global workforce.<sup>170</sup> And by 2025, they will account for 75% of the global population.<sup>171</sup> This equates to more than half of the global workforce!

However, a report prepared by Gallup currently shows that 71% of millennials feel little or no commitment to their work.<sup>172</sup> As a generation raised on computers and video games, it's only natural that gamification will help solve this problem.

In fact, gamification satisfies millennials' appetite for collaborative and engaging interactions. While gamification and social learning are two separate things, they do work well together. Adding game mechanics to a social environment can help to fuel a community.

One study shows that 88% of millennials find their job fulfilling when provided with opportunities to make a positive impact.<sup>173</sup> As such, companies are combining social incentives with their gamified programmes.

### 11. Personalisation Will Only Get Better

Standardised gamification systems are becoming a thing of the past. In fact, 94% of businesses say personalisation is critical to their success.<sup>174</sup>

This means that personalisation is also important within gamified solutions. This trend will continue to boost gamification's appeal for modern learners.

Various gamification vendors offer tools to help managers and instructors design personalised gamified experiences for their audience.

When it comes to personalisation, we've only seen a glimpse of its enormous potential. The best is yet to come. The advances being made in learning technology will soon enable even more ways of personalising a learner's journey.

### 12. More Brands Will Gamify Their Social Media Activities

More than half of the world now uses social media. Similarly, the number of social media users who identify as 'gamers' has grown by more than 10 million, or 32%, in the last year.<sup>175</sup>

Social media triggers the release of the same neurotransmitters that make games so addictive. For instance, dopamine is released each time we discover new information.

We get a rush of oxytocin when we engage in positive social interactions. In fact, did you know that regular Facebook users are 43% more likely to trust other people than non-users?<sup>176</sup>

Today, many companies are gamifying their social media initiatives to boost brand engagement and trust.<sup>177</sup> Big businesses such as M&M's, LinkedIn and Waze have integrated game elements into their social media strategies with great success.<sup>178</sup>

We expect more companies will soon follow suit. After all, social media has been shown to boost engagement metrics by 100-150%.<sup>179</sup>

NextGen gamified learning systems<sup>180</sup> are also offering similar social features. Learning administrators and professionals are thus able to tap into the very same motivations that make social media so engaging.

## Sustainability Trends

### 13. Gamification Will Drive Corporate Sustainability Campaigns

Consumer demand for sustainable brands will only increase in the coming years. The pandemic has accelerated this trend. 95% of survey respondents are now more concerned with environmental issues.<sup>181</sup>

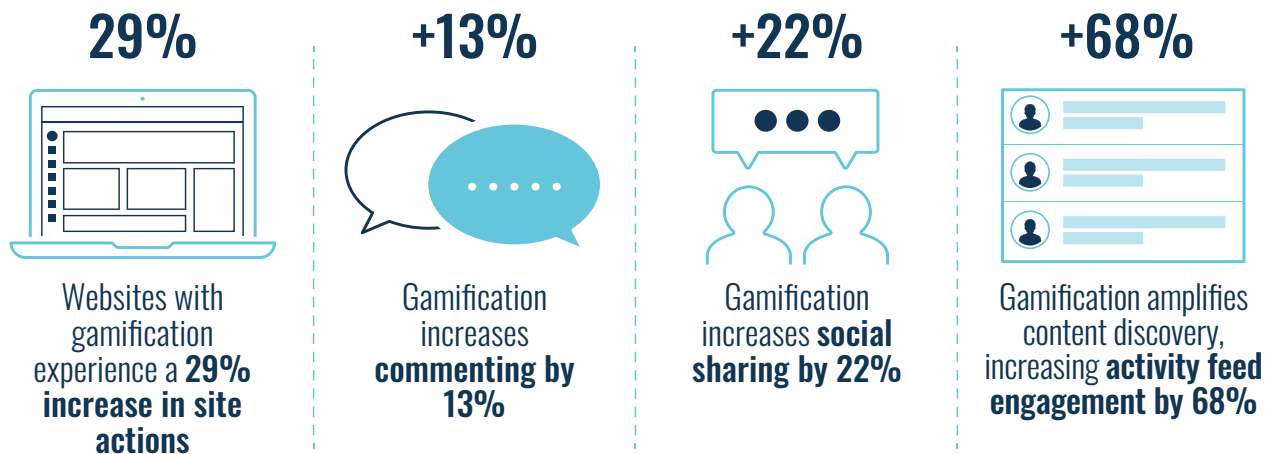
In addition, more than 90% of business leaders consider sustainability to be one of the key drivers for their company's success.<sup>182</sup>

As such, companies are stepping up their sustainability initiatives with the help of gamification.

Some notable companies have already started gamifying their sustainability campaigns. Toyota, for instance, use gamification to encourage their customers to become more energy-efficient.<sup>183</sup> Other organisations have also integrated the gamification of sustainability into their business model. One example is Recyclebank, a New York-based company on a mission to encourage recycling and good environmental habits.<sup>184</sup>

They reward members for participating in everyday green actions. Users earn Recyclebank Points which they can then exchange for deals and discounts at local businesses.

## The Impact of Gamification on Social Media



Source: [www.gigya.com](http://www.gigya.com)

With the global sustainability market set to grow at a CAGR of 26.6% until 2025, we can only expect more companies to adopt gamified green solutions.<sup>185</sup>

### 14. Gamification Will Support Well-Being & Fitness Programmes

A 2021 Employee Wellness Industry Trends Report shows that mental health is at the top of everyone's mind.<sup>186</sup> As such, companies are turning to gamification to boost the wellbeing of their employees.

For instance, the banking giant Citibank understood the crucial link between physical fitness and the wellbeing of its employees.<sup>187</sup>

So, they gamified their employee fitness programme. They used rewards to encourage employees to become more active.

Similarly, gamification is poised to become a key component of fitness programmes in the coming years.<sup>188</sup> One popular fitness app is Nike Run Club.<sup>189</sup>

This app allows users to compete with each other by sharing daily fitness activity stats. It also provides challenges and rewards to keep users motivated on a regular basis.

As such, the app has helped cultivate an active community of members dedicated to their fitness goals. It has also benefited the company as this strengthened brand awareness and loyalty.

## Tech Trends

### 15. Companies Will Look Towards Mobile-first Gamified Solutions

There are almost 5.22 billion unique mobile phone users in the world.<sup>190</sup> This helps to explain why today's companies are implementing mobile-first gamified training solutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has effectively put an end to extensive face-to-face training sessions, lengthy lectures and rigid learning schedules. Learning now occurs at the point of need. As a result, mobile learning has gained a huge amount of traction.

Mobile learning provides learners with easy access to their learning material, any time and any place.



Source: Digital Market Outlook

Moreover, content authoring tools are being used to create interactive microlearning material that can be consumed on the go. This content is typically easy to digest, engaging and mobile-friendly.

Game mechanics like Badges, XP and Leaderboards added within the content can also help motivate learners into action.

In the next few years, we can only expect that more companies will adapt a mobile-first design philosophy to appeal to the needs of the modern learner. Before long, the gamification of mobile learning solutions will help increase levels of engagement.

A great example of this is the Growth Engineering Learning App. This microlearning solution uses gamification to drive better knowledge retention throughout organisations of varying shapes and sizes.

## 16. Gamification Will Partner With Immersive Technologies (AR, VR, MR)

Gamification will soon step up to a new level of accessibility, interactivity and lifestyle integration. This will be facilitated through the use of immersive technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR) and Mixed Reality (MR).<sup>191</sup>

As these technologies continue to develop, so too will their adoption by a variety of different companies.

Multiple industries are already implementing immersive technologies to conduct onboarding and training activities. Exxon Mobil, for instance, adopted gamified VR to provide safety training for their employees.<sup>192</sup>

As the capacity of immersive technology improves, this will support better gamified experiences. These experiences will fuel engagement in a variety of capacities and could prove to be a game-changer for the gamification market.

## 17. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Will Integrate With Gamified Solutions

Here at Growth Engineering, we're excited by the increasing adoption of AI-driven gamified solutions. This is a major growth area. In fact, the AI industry will have a projected value of \$190bn by 2025.

Even at present, 83% of leaders believe AI is a strategic priority for their businesses.<sup>193</sup> What's more, there are many companies already using AI and gamification in combination.

For instance, Procter & Gamble leveraged AI in their gamified recruitment process. Assessment tests harnessed AI to generate an applicant-centred experience. Exams adjusted dynamically in response to the candidate's performance.

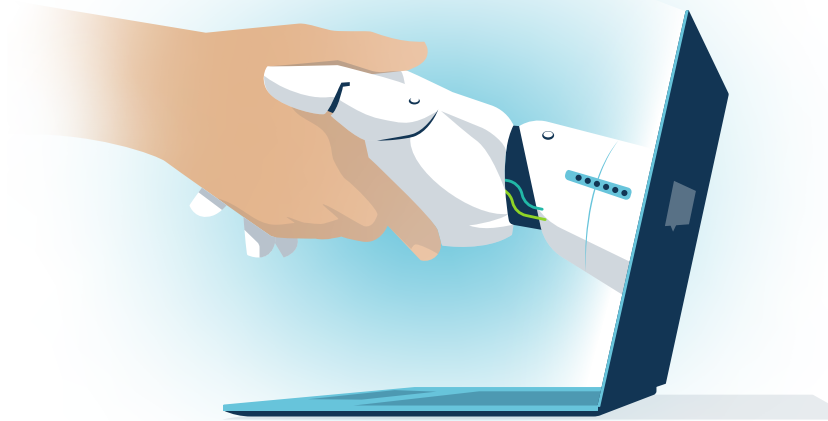
The findings exceeded projections, resulting in a 300% rise in positive employee outcomes.

AI-driven gamified systems are also enabling organisations to tailor better onboarding and training programmes. Data-driven insights and recommendations can be provided in real-time by AI engines.

Learners are then served with tailor-fit training modules that align with their preferences at any point in their programme.

Creating and administering training material is also becoming increasingly automated with the help of AI. This helps L&D professionals save more time so that they can focus their energy on tasks that really help to move the dial.

All in all, the potential for gamification powered by AI is boundless. As this technology becomes more sophisticated, we can only expect more benefits and possibilities for its use.



## 18. Internet Of Things (IoT) Will Sync With Gamification Features

A Gartner study predicts that 30 billion devices will be connected to the internet by the end of this year.<sup>194</sup> That's roughly 27.5 billion more than a decade ago!

Nielsen also reports that one in six consumers now own a wearable device.<sup>195</sup> Similarly, 35 billion IoT devices will be deployed globally this year, and 75.44 billion by 2025.<sup>196</sup>

As such, there is much opportunity for IoT to be able to influence how we live, communicate and interact with others. In the future, you should expect organisations to integrate IoT devices within their gamified training programmes.

After all, IoT devices provide a deeper scope of data (by incorporating sensory inputs) that can be used to fuel richer recommendations.

This could prove to be useful in a variety of contexts. Its integration with gamification could drive further levels of uptake and engagement.

Game mechanics linked with IoT can also provide a more immersive learning experience. For example, Microsoft has created Virtual Stage, a background-matting experiment.<sup>197</sup> The platform connects IoT powered technology and Azure Kinect sensors to create a 3D 'virtual' stage for speakers.

There are countless other possibilities for how tech may be adapted for future gamified programmes. The potential is endless.

## 19. Blockchain Technology Will Ramp Up Digital Transparency & Rewards

Blockchain technology has empowered and popularised the use of cryptocurrencies. In the business world, big companies are using blockchain technology to enhance their loyalty programmes.

For example, Singapore Airlines has launched a blockchain-powered campaign for its customers.<sup>198</sup> They could exchange flyer miles earned for digital tokens. More importantly, customers can sleep well knowing that online transactions involving these tokens are secure.

Within gamification, the integration of blockchain technology will add flexibility to game mechanics. For instance, Badges or Experience Points earned could

be safely exchanged for cryptocurrencies. In fact, a study shows the benefit of digital incentives powered by blockchain.<sup>199</sup>

The technology can also promote security for digital currencies earned on a gamified LMS or mobile app. For example, recent innovations include blockchain-powered wallets designed to support gamified activities.<sup>200</sup>

This enables players to secure their digital rewards within a virtual space. With this in mind, it's clear that blockchain has the potential to create a safer and more transparent gamified experience for users across all manner of solutions. This will only help to drive deeper and more meaningful levels of engagement.

## Final Words

From these trends, the picture is clear. We will continue to see the rise of gamification across different sectors. As gamified technologies continue to evolve, so will the benefits and use cases for gamification.

The rapid growth in smartphone usage will feed a strong demand for gamified mobile solutions. Growing social trends such as remote working and flexible learning practises will also help drive this.

Gamification will also remain a pivotal tool in the workplace to drive employee engagement and business impact. This impact will expand as gamified software evolves and increases in scope.

This will result in a new tranche of gamification benefits and use cases that we can explore in the coming years.



## THE FINAL WORD

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Gamifying your training approach can be very effective. When done right, it can truly engage your employees and drive behavioural change. In turn, this can create serious business returns for your organisation.

But you have to make sure you get your strategy right. Start by identifying problems with your existing training setup, understanding your audience and finding the right gamified solution.

After all, your game mechanics won't move the dial if you completely disregard your learners' needs and motivations. Only then will you be able to create the best gamified environment for your organisation.

And what about us here at Growth Engineering? Why do we care so much about gamification in training? Well, we have pioneered the use of gamification within L&D!

In fact, we exist to wage war on dull online learning, engage learners with their personal and professional development and drive positive social impact through our learning technology solutions.

That's why our solutions focus on incentivising the right activities, inspiring curiosity and creating learning communities. After all, we know that your learners become better equipped to help you reach your key organisational objectives as soon as they begin to unlock their full potential.

We have successfully engaged learners through our three gamified training solutions: Growth Engineering LMS, Learning App and Authoring Tool.

These efforts have garnered us multiple awards<sup>201</sup>, including Top Gamification Learning Management Systems 2021, Top eLearning Gamification Companies 2021 and Top Content Providers for Gamification 2020.

But more than just engagement, we deliver high-impact business results. Our gamified technology solutions have been shown to improve team performance by as much as 75% year-on-year and improve sales growth by 20%.

With our help, you too can build an effective and engaging online gamified learning strategy.

**Want to learn more? Please reach out using the contact details at the end of this guidebook!**



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### Gamification

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Shape your learning environment



### Pathways

Manage learning curricula and levels



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### Integrations

Connect your existing systems to automate



### Social Learning

Bring your audience together



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Create and share learning experiences



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### Classrooms

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