



# Gamification Within the Channel

## Introduction

Gamification is used by a sizeable number of forward-thinking Fortune 1,000 enterprises to transform critical business processes into actionable behavior. Included in the wide variety of approaches these companies take, are strategies designed to accelerate learning and familiarity, inspire organizational knowledge-share, and create cultures where personal and professional development is considered a pathway to success<sup>1</sup>.

CR Worldwide is of the opinion that gamification can do all of that (and more) for vendors and their partners. Along those lines, we are delighted to provide a research-driven perspective on how gamification can strengthen the onboarding process, expedite skills transfer, add economic certainty for budget holders and, as one would suspect, do all of this while putting a little fun into the process.

## Strengthening the onboarding process

Third parties help businesses grow and stay competitive. But if one is not careful, those trusted partnerships can underperform, or worse, vanish altogether. The onboarding phase is a prime opportunity for companies to win over the hearts and minds of new partners. Businesses that invest in improving the onboarding experience are more likely to see better long-term outcomes—like increased engagement levels across the channel, faster paths to partner proficiency, and decreased attrition levels.

Let's face it, motivating channel partners to promote and highlight your products amid tough competition is a stiff challenge. Effective channel partnerships can increase sales, decrease the need for additional marketing investments, and give access within competitive areas but only if those alliances fit squarely in your camp. In other words, partners must be emotionally and intellectually committed to a mutually beneficial relationship with you.

Onboarding is critical with any channel connection. It sets the tone for the entire path forward; it helps a brand stand out even more, it empowers vendors for success from the very first transaction, and it lays the ground work for ongoing trust and prosperity. It's critical that channel partners have all the resources they need to get off on the right foot and that the supporting materials are clear and understood.

Any alternative is unacceptable. Vendor disengagement and the subsequent churn it produces can have expensive ramifications in both real and opportunity costs. On the other hand, a well-prepared channel can help optimize earnings. Engaged partners can provide coverage, service, support, and knowledge for potential customers. Translated: They can work as brand ambassadors.

A comprehensive onboarding process complete with gamification-aided know-how and training can help boost loyalty and retention throughout and beyond. Game mechanics like puzzle solving, scratch and win, or spin and win opportunities, combined with game rewards like leaderboards, tiered levels and prize drawings help partners to not only understand what's

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<sup>1</sup>How Gamification Drives Business Objectives, CIO Magazine, Kapko, 2014

<sup>2</sup>4 Reasons Why Vendor Onboarding Is Critical For Your B2B Brand, Santaniello, 2017

expected of them, they reward those who hit key educational, planning or performance measures. And they do all of this in a fun and competitive manner.

## **Expediting learning and skills transfer**

Gamification has been credited with the quick and comprehensive absorption of working knowledge<sup>3</sup>. Through leaderboards, badges, certification opportunities and other elements, gamification can link the completion of lessons learned to achievement levels and/or other forms of status.

For example, some organizations are using “leveling” techniques (like the progression one might accomplish in a video game) of partners and channel reps to encourage and demonstrate the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. This practice expedites the transfer of organizational know-how and facilitates a certification currency within the partner community.

What is the business case for linking learning and gamification? Developmental initiatives can underperform when the content is not reinforced. Professionals charged with training and development say it is often not the curriculum or the delivery that is to be blamed for education’s lack-luster performance. No, training investments sometimes fail to yield the desired business results because the lessons learned are not bolstered through activities like games and/or rewards<sup>4</sup>.

While not designed to be a replacement for any formal LMS platform or formal training, gamification serves as more of a complimentary method that reinforces key learning messages. The average person will forget about 80% of what they have learned within 30 days<sup>5</sup>. Gamification helps to improve the retention curve by emphasizing the key takeaways and encouraging ongoing utilization of lessons learned through incentives.

Gamification speeds up and multiplies skills transfer at a more efficient level. It can help do the same within select portions of a vendor’s channel. Games teach (and reinforce) by engaging and entertaining their audiences. How impactful is the improvement? According to one study conducted by the University of Colorado<sup>6</sup>, gamification within the learning process resulted in the following benefits: a 20% higher post-training proficiency rating, an 11% rise in declarative understanding, a 14% procedural knowledge advancement and a 9% gain in retention. None of that is surprising when you consider that 80% of learners said education would be more productive for them if it were game-oriented, and that 66% said that a gamified curriculum was more motivating than a traditional one<sup>7</sup>.

## **Adding certainty to budget planning**

A gamification-based strategy can come in at a much smaller price tag than other motivators. Rewards within any of the onboarding or learning processes can be achievement-based, or they can be funded with points. And within the gamification range of options, budget methodologies can include the following:

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<sup>3</sup>The Influence and Effectiveness of Gamification in eLearning, Technology Advice, Gatto, 2018

<sup>4</sup>Why Training Fails, Association for Talent Development, Latham, 2013

<sup>5</sup>10 Benefits of Microlearning-Based Training. eLearning Industry, Pandey

<sup>6</sup>University of Colorado, A Meta-Analytic Examination of the Instructional Effectiveness of Computer-Based Simulation Games, 2011

<sup>7</sup>Computers in Entertainment, What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy, Gee, J. P. 2003

**1/ Fixed Action Rewards** are utilized when the recipient knows exactly what they must do to get the reward. This type of motivator builds loyalty and reinforces frequent, on-going actions. Budgets under this scenario can be open (meaning unlimited) but also be predicated on hitting certain levels. That correlation (between achievement and result) promises the sponsor a fixed return between rewards spent and the accomplishment of a task. All of this can equate to a documentable, incremental, financial gain for an organization, for every reward dollar invested.

**2/ Random Rewards** appear once the player achieves a certain level or threshold. This method surprises (and delights) the winner. The idea here is that the good feelings carry over and make channel participants even more engaged and committed to moving forward in the process. Payouts can be set at a given budget or they can vary or fluctuate depending on what makes sense for the business.

**3/ Sudden rewards** (like Random Rewards) are not advertised to the participants and are paid out unexpectedly when players take a specific action. Since they are not known to the targeted base they can be reduced or removed at any time, giving more flexibility within funding parameters.

**4/ Rolling rewards.** Program managers can pre-select the number of winners that may (or may not) win after they complete an action. This protects the aggregate payout budget, but it is also highly motivating because the more a participant achieves, the more they move up in levels. And as they matriculate up the board, they get to play further (and their chances of winning become even higher).

**5/ Prize pacing.** Participants are given one small piece of a prize at a time. They must collect all pieces to win. This method has been known to drive long-term behavior over a preselected period and do so for a fraction of the normal cost.

## Putting more fun into the process

Not only do games put the fun back into learning, they can add excitement and engagement around every task a channel partner needs to participate in. Everyone likes games and all the friendly competition and rewards that come with them. When people have fun their attention spans increase, they devote more mind share to tasks and they enjoy doing it.

Ninety percent of people feel more productive when they are involved with projects that leverage gamification. And those numbers do not decrease as audiences age. In fact, 97% of people over the age of forty-five say that gamification makes them more productive and makes their work even more enjoyable<sup>8</sup>.

Games leverage our intrinsic motivators like our desire to compete, to earn status and to be recognized. And as you might imagine, game designers have documented the type of fun participants have as they play them. For instance, there is a category called People Fun that builds social bonds and teamwork. Then there is Easy Fun which inspires exploration, role play and curiosity. Hard Fun provides a challenge and rewards us when we solve a riddle, overcome a

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<sup>8</sup>47 Gamification Statistics You Must Know, Finances Online, 2020

barrier, or develop a winning strategy. And there is Serious Fun which comes along with lessons learned and the acquisition of new knowledge. It teaches us to think, feel, behave, or make a difference in the way we act<sup>9</sup>.

The fun that games produce can be leveraged within us to Increase motivation, encourage creativity, strengthen communications, build engagement, promote innovation, and sharpen professional skills sets, all while building on the corporate image of the sponsoring company.

## A word about next steps...

CR Worldwide offers gamification solutions in a wide variety of formats and functions. Our portfolio ranges from simple digital scratch-off cards to more thought-provoking skill-based elements. Each game can be built to match a brand, voice style and design protocols if need be. Our implementation time can be as short as two weeks.



## Talk To Us

Talk to us about how to implement gamification in your business...



call us **0370 405 2020**  
or **+44 (0) 1789 404 020**



[enquiries@crworldwide.com](mailto:enquiries@crworldwide.com)



[www.crworldwide.com](http://www.crworldwide.com)

By: **Mike Ryan | CR Worldwide Business Development Director**

<sup>9</sup>Explore the anatomy of fun in gamification! Cross knowledge blog, 2018