



KPMG

cutting through complexity

Competing for engagement

The approach, findings and implications
of a gamified pilot project

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Contents

01

Executive summary

19

Project management observations

05

Introduction



06

Our challenge and response

10

Key findings

- Participation
- Performance
- Our people and their attitudes



21

Conclusion

22

Contact us



Executive summary

This white paper shares the approach, findings and implications of a pilot project that used a gamified tool to improve staff awareness of KPMG's service capabilities. We hope that sharing this information will help shape the activities and expectations of the gamification projects of others.

Engaging with employees is a constant challenge. With over 5,000 people working across 150 different offerings in our Audit, Tax and Advisory divisions in Australia, KPMG has a lot to offer clients to help them grow, manage risk and identify different ways of operating that deliver fundamentally better results. The ongoing challenge is to ensure our people are aware of the breadth of our capabilities so they can effectively connect a client issue with the appropriate service area.

We chose to pilot the use of gamification techniques to address our challenge. Gamification uses game elements and game-design techniques in non-game contexts¹.

The results of the pilot were positive:

- 80 percent of our people had fun playing.
- 60,000 questions about the firm's capabilities were answered in a 3 month period.
- 21 percent improvement in capability awareness was observed.

The implications of some of our key findings may be relevant to any organisation considering a gamification project:

- More mature individuals may be more responsive to gamification experiences than their younger peers.
- Millennials² who are heavy video game users are challenging to keep engaged.

- Gamified tools can improve awareness of otherwise uninteresting topics and be used to close knowledge gaps.
- Gamified tools enable knowledge baselining and testing of content mastery assumptions.
- Staff comfort levels about playing games at work need to be considered.
- Concerns about gaming knowledge or ability as an obstacle to participation, performance and enjoyment may be unfounded.
- Financial rewards will influence behaviour.

We believe that applied appropriately, gamification has a role to play in helping to engage people, encourage behaviours and achieve specified objectives. If your organisation is experiencing an engagement challenge, whether this be customer or staff related, the application of gamification principles may be appropriate and help address your challenge.



1. Kevin Werbach & Dan Hunter, 'How game thinking can revolutionise your business'.

2. There is no single authority on the start and end dates of generational categories. The terms 'millennial' and 'Generation Y' are commonly used interchangeably. For the purpose of this report, millennials are defined as individuals born between 1980 and 1994, as defined by Mark McCrindle in 'The ABC of XYZ', 2014.

Key findings, implications and observations



PARTICIPATION

Within the first 3 months

16%
of staff logged on to play the game

AND

Answered
60,000
questions


Employees
OPTIONALLY PARTICIPATED
without the topic being particularly exciting


JUNIOR EMPLOYEES
were more likely to log on
THAN SENIOR EMPLOYEES


SENIOR EMPLOYEES
were more likely to be
POWER USERS³

GRADUATES
(OUR YOUNGEST MILLENNIALS)


were the most likely group to log on, but the second most likely group to 'drop out' quickly and never play again

 **MEN**
were more likely to log on

 **WOMEN**
were slightly more likely to become power users

GRADUATE 'DROP OUTS'
SPEND NEARLY



TWICE
as many hours per week playing video games than their more participative graduate peers

IMPLICATIONS

- More mature individuals can be more responsive to gamification experiences than their younger peers
- Gamification techniques can improve awareness of otherwise unexciting topics
- Game uptake by gender should consider log on and continued use separately
- Millennials who are heavy video game users are challenging to keep engaged due to high expectations

3. Power users are defined as staff that reached level five or above in the seven level game.
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PERFORMANCE

Employees improved their

AWARENESS

of the firm's service capabilities by

21%

Regardless of employee grading, gender, division and location, all segments improved

THEIR UNDERSTANDING

of KPMG's offerings to a similar level, 'closing the gap'

EMPLOYEE HIERARCHY

was not a reliable indicator of baseline awareness of the firm's offerings, particularly as difficulty increased

IMPLICATIONS

Gamification techniques can be used to close knowledge gaps

Gamified tools enable knowledge baselining and testing of content mastery assumptions



OUR PEOPLE AND THEIR ATTITUDES



Non-gamers and gamers participated at the same levels, improved their awareness by the same amount and had just as much fun



Employees thought they would be

COMFORTABLE PLAYING A GAME AT WORK

for learning purposes, but weren't as comfortable as expected once the game was released



FINANCIAL REWARDS

CHANGED BEHAVIOURS

IMPLICATIONS

Staff comfort about playing games to learn at work should be considered and mitigated

Concerns about gaming knowledge or ability as an obstacle to participation, performance and enjoyment may be unfounded

Consider the appropriateness and size of financial rewards in attempting to influence behaviour

Consider whether the intended users value time over an improved experience



PRE-GAME SURVEY

EXCITEMENT



were 'quite a bit' or 'extremely' excited about playing a game at work for training purposes

ANXIETY



felt at least a little anxiety about playing a game at work for training purposes

POST-GAME SURVEY

FUN



had fun playing the game

CONCENTRATION



concentrated a good deal during the game

LEARNING



agreed they learned a lot playing the game

GAMES AND TRAINING



wanted training to incorporate games if it took no additional time



wanted training to incorporate games if it took twice as long



agreed that playing games for training purposes is appropriate in the work place

GAMES AND TRAINING



agreed that where possible, training should be turned into games



agreed that in the future a significant amount of training will include integrated gaming

PROJECT MANAGEMENT OBSERVATIONS

Convince your potential sponsor



with strong fundamentals

Ensure you get a strong sponsor



and business buy-in

Complete a thorough



procurement process

Identify and consider



cross-business stakeholders

Stick to



the plan

Develop a



thick skin

Frame the project



appropriately

Look forward



to the results



Introduction

Games have the power to motivate, compel and foster engagement.

People play games for many reasons, but there are some constants.

Whether it be beating your older brother or sister at Monopoly, hitting the sweet spot on a golf ball or achieving a level in a video game, there is a sense of challenge, excitement and achievement that people receive from playing games.

Organisations are using elements from games in non-game settings to engage people and encourage behaviours to achieve business objectives. This is how we think about 'gamification', a term that has different meanings for different people.

Individuals and organisations use gamification to achieve a wide range of different objectives.

For example,

- BBVA, a Spanish bank, is using gamification techniques to teach customers about their banking products in a fun way⁴, and drive growth.
- SAP uses gamification to educate its sales representatives to better respond to customer questions⁵.
- Superbetter is an app designed by health professionals to boost different kinds of resilience to live a happier life, in the wake of a particularly tough time or traumatic experience⁶.

Our employees use smart phones and tablets on a daily basis and are accustomed to stimulating delivery and experiences.

As this engagement expectation increases, the approach to competing for their engagement in the workplace must adapt.

We piloted the use of gamification techniques to engage our employees and encourage them to learn more about the firm's offerings to clients. We hope that sharing our experiences will help shape the activities and expectations of others considering or already executing gamification projects.



4. Bernardo Crespo, BBVA, 'Innovation Edge publication', September 2012.

5. Mario Herger & Janaki Kumar, 'Gamification at Work: Designing Engaging Business Software', The Interaction Design Foundation.

6. Jane McGonigal, www.superbetter.com



Our challenge and response

As with any large organisation, our size and complexity can make effective learning among our 5,000 plus employees spread out across Australia a challenge.

This was the issue we faced when we were considering the best way to improve the awareness of our people about the 150 different capabilities across Audit, Tax and Advisory that we provide. For our employees, being aware of each of these capabilities is essential.

But how to help our staff improve their awareness of the different service capabilities in a way that is fun, engaging, effective and efficient?

It's an important question. When aware of the breadth of our capabilities, our people are better able to match client issues with the appropriate service area, improve relationships, help clients more effectively, and ultimately enable us to grow.

The challenge

Existing tools and resources (including intranet materials, printed documents, etc.) were simply not seen as engaging learning tools by a majority of employees. More engaging methods of improving awareness were manually intensive and not nationally scalable in a cost effective manner.



Our response

The following 10 activities summarise our approach in responding to the awareness challenge.

Experienced project managers will notice that many of the activities are similar to 'typical' projects. While our pilot project had some specific gamification elements, it adhered to project management fundamentals during execution.

1 Considered gamification as a possible solution to the awareness challenge

We workshopped the problem and arrived at a number of principles to underpin the solution:

- be considered fun and engaging by staff
- have a clear objective to help our people learn about the firm's offerings
- be scalable and accessible to our entire national workforce
- appeal to all employees, regardless of gender or seniority
- incorporate a functionality to promote collaborative behaviour.

After a further workshop considering potential solutions, we concluded a gamified solution was the best option.

2 Formed initial design ideas

We workshopped a number of game ideas to satisfy the required principles. This involved understanding our creative and game design limits. To capture the support of our sponsor we needed to clearly demonstrate a positive and measurable user experience, as well as the possibilities of the pilot.

3 Clarified value proposition

The target users, objectives, key performance indicators, benefits, challenges, risks and costs were clarified in a workshop to better define the value proposition. This was then translated into a presentation for us to more clearly define the appetite for further development by the business.

4 Pitched to leadership for feedback

A 30 minute pitch to a business leader was conducted, which resulted in the opportunity to submit a formal business case.

5 Created a formal business case

A formal business case was completed, articulating the value proposition, risks and financials (return on investment).



6 Secured sponsor support and pilot funding

The formal business case was provided to the sponsor, who agreed to put the case forward for funding consideration, which was approved.

7 Underwent a procurement process to find a suitable vendor

The procurement process considered the type of solution offered by vendors (many are tied to specific technology offerings), as well as our assessment against the defined vendor scoring system, which included the 'fun factor', capability to deliver against requirements, references and other elements.

The process had many steps typical to procurement, including short-listing the initial vendor list, holding initial discussions with these vendors, selecting an appropriately skilled procurement panel, authoring a detailed request for proposal document, assessing proposals against the developed scoring system, short-listing vendors and hearing/assessing the final list of potential vendors.

8 Selected and resourced a project team to execute the project

Within the resource constraints imposed by the pilot nature of the project, a small core execution team was assembled.

9 Commenced detailed design, tool build and implementation

Further time was spent refining the concept to arrive at a detailed design. Decisions were finalised about the type of game to be built, aided by the defined guiding principles. The vendor then progressed with the tool build and implementation into the enterprise environment.

10 Completed enterprise project management activities

We developed a project overview document, a detailed project plan (including activities, dependencies, team responsibilities, stakeholders and milestones), and a stakeholder management plan to execute. Together, these three documents formed our execution plans, which ensured we did not deviate from the project objectives (from a time, cost and quality perspective) and were able to adequately manage stakeholder requirements. The plans covered technical aspects (alpha and beta testing, as well as non-technical aspects (marketing, communications, risk signoffs, privacy, etc.).

As the game was implemented, feedback and tool results were communicated to the project sponsors. At the conclusion of the pilot, a formal, detailed report was shared with the project sponsors. We also asked our people to complete pre-game and post-game surveys to share their views on gamified tools in the workplace. This enabled us to better understand the views of our people and their expectations for the future.

Before we launched the game, we were excited about learning the answers to five key questions:

- 1 Will our people have fun playing the game?
- 2 If we create a gamified tool that is fun and engaging, will our people log on and use it to learn about the firm's offerings?
- 3 Will only junior staff log on and play?
- 4 Will there be an improvement in awareness of the firm's capabilities?
- 5 Do our people see gaming as a legitimate tool to help people learn in a work environment?

The game was launched in August 2013.

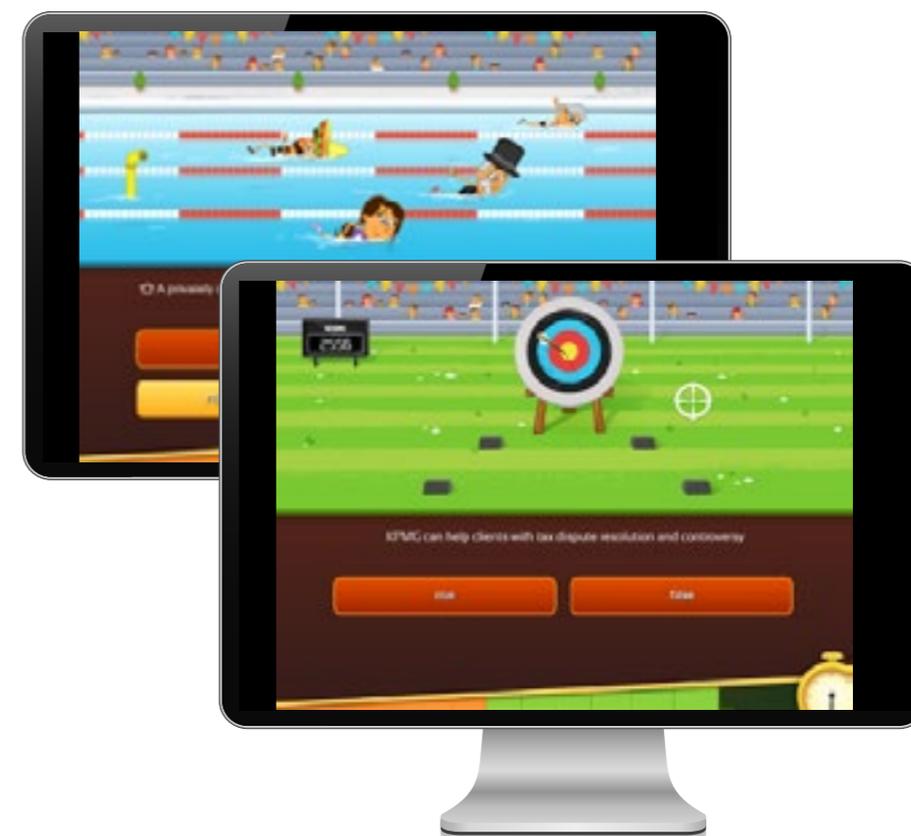
The game

The funding allowed us to build a game mechanic that stayed true to our guiding principles. The tool was cloud based, and staff logged in from their work laptops to play.

In single player mode, players competed in races by answering a series of questions about the firm's capabilities. The game typically asked the user a 'trigger' question (e.g. which team can help you with this problem?). If the answers were rapid and accurate, the user's avatar would complete the race more quickly, earning a position on firm-wide leaderboards and eligibility for small rewards (movie tickets, coffee vouchers, and raffle tickets). The races were quick, with the seven questions per race answered (on average) in less than 2 minutes.

As users correctly answered questions they progressed to higher levels, where the degree of difficulty increased (the questions about the offerings become more granular).

A tournament mode was also designed and built, enabling groups/teams to play against each other across the country.



Key findings

Three months after launch, we were able to answer our top five pre-launch questions, using a combination of survey responses and data collected from the tool.

The answers showed a positive outcome for the pilot.

-
- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Will our people have fun playing the game? |  | Over 80 percent of respondents had fun playing the game. |
| 2 If we create a gamified tool that is fun and engaging, will our people log on and use it to learn about the firm's capabilities? |  | Over 16 percent of KPMG Australia employees logged on to play in the first three months and answered more than 60,000 questions. This was a great result considering marketing was minimal and the game was optional. |
| 3 Will only junior staff log on and play? |  | Usage was spread across all roles and divisions, with younger users more likely to log-on while employees at Associate Director and Director levels were most likely to become 'power users'. |
| 4 Will there be an improvement in the awareness of the firm's capabilities? |  | A measurable improvement of 21 percent in the awareness of the firm's service capabilities was recorded (up to 26 percent for more difficult questions). |
| 5 Is gaming seen as a legitimate tool to help people learn in a work environment? |  | Eighty four percent of respondents stated that they believed 'playing games' for training was appropriate while 59 percent felt that, where possible, training should be turned into games. |
-

The findings of the pilot are categorised into three groups: Participation, Performance and Our People and their Attitudes.





Participation

As this was a pilot project, we were faced with a number of unknowns. Perhaps the most significant of these was that we had little certainty of how many employees would actually participate and use the tool. The tool was optional to use, with no pressure or expectation from management to participate. This was especially the case as the launch had no overt promotion. Marketing was limited to an announcement on the firm's intranet and email communications to selected groups of people.

Within 3 months, we were happy to see that more than 900 people (16 percent of the Australian firm) logged in and answered over 60,000 questions about the firm's offerings. Participation was also consistent across divisions.

Gender and staff seniority

The staff population has a gender split of 52 percent male, 48 percent female. Of those who participated in the pilot, 60 percent were male and 40 percent female. However, while men were more likely to log on, women were 3 percent more likely to become power users⁷ once logged on (19 percent for women, 16 percent for men).

It became clear that while junior employees were more likely to log on and have the highest number of power users, it was senior employees (particularly at Director and Associate Director levels) who had the highest percentage of power users in their group. The central feedback theme from these senior users was interest in the content, with an awareness that understanding the firm's service offerings would assist with career progression.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHERS

When making assumptions about the uptake of gamified tools by gender, carefully consider the initial log on and continued use as separate elements.

More mature individuals can be more responsive to gamification experiences than their younger peers.

Contesting uninteresting content

Staff participated in the optional pilot, despite respondents indicating that the content was not particularly interesting – admittedly, this was a dry topic.

"I think the game format is a great way to cover material that can be a bit dull."

Associate Director, Melbourne

In fact, within the initial 3 month period, over 16 percent of employees logged on to answer over 60,000 questions, and as respondents indicated, had fun doing it.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHERS

Gamification techniques can be used to improve the awareness of a topic that people may otherwise not be particularly excited about.

The graduates (our youngest millennials)

It's easy to generalise and assume 'young people are all gamers', so surely they'll be the most enthusiastic about a gamified tool. But we discovered reality isn't always so straightforward.

Our graduates (typically 21–23 years old, the youngest of the millennial generation at the firm) were certainly the most likely group to log on, but, interestingly, they were the second most likely group to 'drop out' quickly and never play again.

For them, adoption of the gamified tool wasn't the issue, it was keeping them engaged.

Why is this the case? The key feedback theme from graduate experimenters⁸ was the comparison of this tool to commercially available gaming alternatives. The development budget of some of these games can be in the tens of millions of dollars. In comparison, our a low-budget tool couldn't compete.

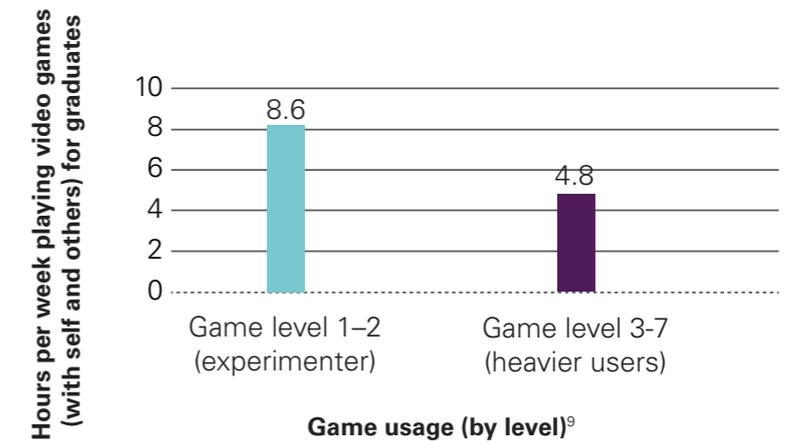
To engage this millennial demographic, careful consideration of tool design is required. If the tool is not as engaging as commercially available gaming alternatives, how will an optional, basic work tool compete?

Just because they log on doesn't mean they'll stay.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHERS

When considering uptake by the millennial generation, show caution in assuming engagement levels, particularly where there are higher levels of video game use.

Video game usage for graduates, segmented by tool usage



"An important insight from the project is that millennials are discerning and that the key to sustainable engagement is providing greater levels of challenge and meaning."

Marigo Raftopoulos, Doctoral Researcher, Enterprise Innovation and Gamification, RMIT University

8. 'Experimenters' are defined as players that achieved level 2 or below in the game.
9. As players answered questions correctly, they progressed through the seven levels of the game.



Performance

Getting the baseline

The ultimate aim of the pilot was to improve awareness of the firm’s offerings. Consequently, we had to determine a baseline for how much our people already knew. This baseline had not previously been captured.

Once this was determined, the improved understanding was then calculated from this baseline.

Measurable improvement observed

Overall, we were happy to see that the more employees played, the greater their improvement in awareness. We observed a 21 percent improvement in awareness of the firm’s capabilities. This improvement increased to as high as 26 percent for more difficult questions.

“I enjoyed playing and learnt a lot more about KPMG through a different medium.”

Senior team member, Wollongong

Improvement for all

We had expected that certain groups (segmented by employee grade, division or gender) would arrive at a different level of awareness than others.

However, those with a lower baseline awareness were able to ‘close the gap’ against their higher baseline counterparts, regardless of employee grade, division or gender.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHERS

Gamification techniques may be effective in closing known knowledge gaps within a population.

Assumptions of content mastery

It’s a common assumption that more senior individuals at a service firm will have a greater understanding of services offered than juniors. This naturally implies that those starting out know less about what a firm does and how it gets done.

While in our experience this held true for easy to moderate gaming questions, things changed when our questions became more difficult.

It was at this point we expected to witness the most significant variation between roles; however, staff hierarchy did not prove to be a reliable indicator of baseline awareness of the firm’s offerings.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHERS

Gamified tools enable knowledge baselining and testing of content mastery assumptions.



Our people and their attitudes

The comfort factor

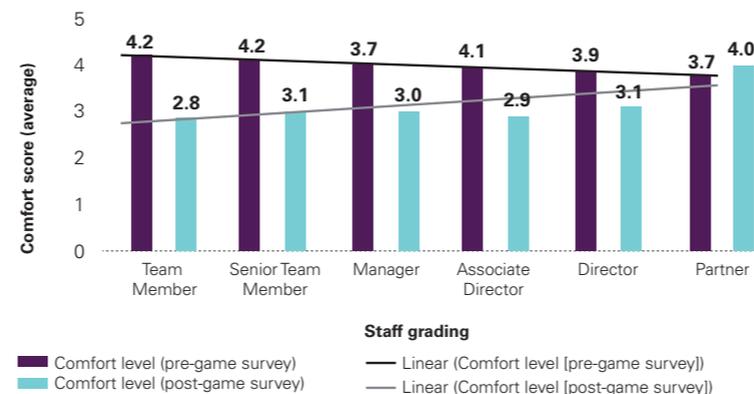
How comfortable would you be playing what looks like a video game in a professional work environment – even if it was for training? Would the possibility of being ‘discovered’ doing something other than work influence your decision to play? Odds are it would.

Despite very positive views towards gaming legitimacy in the pre-game survey (81 percent of our people wanted training to incorporate gaming if it takes no longer time and 73 percent agreeing that the tool looked professional), only 41 percent of staff reported feeling comfortable using the tool at work for training purposes. Neutral views were shared by 22 percent of pilot participants, with the remaining 37 percent showing at least some level of discomfort.

When we looked at pre-game and post-game levels of comfort, some interesting data points were noted.

In the pre-game survey, the more junior the staff grading, the more comfortable they were playing games at work for training purposes. Overall, staff were comfortable.

Comfort (pre-game and post-game survey) and staff grading



Pre-game survey – Responses to the ‘I feel comfortable about playing games at work for training purposes’ statement

Post-game survey – Responses to the ‘I was comfortable playing the game at work’ statement

In the post-game survey, all staff levels felt less comfortable playing games at work for training purposes than in the pre-game survey, other than the partner grading. Overall, staff dropped to a neutral level of comfort.

Ultimately, this ‘lack of comfort’ came down to two factors (as provided by respondent feedback):

- 1 Leadership teams didn’t explicitly endorse the game as a valid training tool.
- 2 Game design, including the fact that there was no KPMG branding on the game. Users felt that this may give their colleagues and supervisors the impression they were ‘playing games’ during work hours, rather than participating in legitimate training.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHERS

For those looking to promote a gamification tool in their own organisation that people are comfortable playing, consideration should be given to formal announcements from leadership, overt organisational branding and game design. This needs to be considered in line with the positioning of the tool, and strike the balance between being ‘fun and optional’ and ‘corporate approved and work like’.



Other observations from surveys

Prior to playing the game, our people were asked to complete a pre-game survey on their views and attitudes towards gaming in the workplace. After playing, a post-game survey followed up with similar questions, as well as specific questions about the game experience. The following key observations were made by survey respondents:

PRE-GAME SURVEY



POST-GAME SURVEY



"A very fun and exciting game."
Manager, Melbourne

"Addictive but good fun."
Graduate, Perth

"There needs to be continued awareness made of The Games and the benefits of this mode of training. There is still some stigma attached to being seen 'playing games' while at work."
Manager, Sydney

"Certainly learnt a lot about what other divisions offer."
Director, Adelaide



The pre-game and post-game responses showed an overall positive view of the gaming experience, as well as the appropriateness of games in the work place.

Some negative feedback about the experience was received, as expected. This centred around the appropriateness of the game mechanic, the content being too simplistic for senior staff and general acceptance of gaming in the workplace. For each of these themes, we received overall positive feedback, but the negative feedback is worth noting.

“Please don’t turn our training into games.”

Anonymous

There was one very negative view towards the integration of gaming in the workplace that was shared during the pre-game survey. Only 13 percent of respondents want training to incorporate games if training times were to double as a result. Following up with a sample of these respondents, the feedback centred on the theme of being ‘time poor’.

“I just don’t have time.”

Manager, Brisbane

“Training should incorporate gaming if it is appropriate for the learning/ education required.”

Senior team member, Melbourne

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHERS

When designing your gamified experience, consider whether the intended users value time over an improved experience.

The importance of fun

In many projects like KPMG’s ‘The Games’, a commonly held bias is that gamification techniques will appeal most to millennial/Gen Y audiences, while older players are more likely to be skeptical or even hostile. What this program’s results reveal – without question – is that ‘fun’ is a universal value; the magic is in matching the kind of fun to the right audience. By making KPMG’s core business its focus, and then creating simple challenge/achievement loops within it, ‘The Games’ created an experience that older and more senior staff members really valued. To some extent this may have been at the expense of a more youthful experience (e.g. a quest or alternate reality game design), however the overall engagement lift of the program suggests that enough younger folks found it amusing.

On further reflection, ‘The Games’ makes the case clearly: you can engage older, more senior staff with the power of gamification – as long as you know what they find fun.

Gabe Zichermann, CEO Dopamine and author of “The Gamification Revolution”

The impact of financial rewards on behaviour

The game included a tournament mechanic that allowed employees to form teams of four to six people to collaborate together and compete against other teams, with the tournaments typically involving 20 or 30 people.

The tournaments were initially fun, social gatherings where the focus of attention was split between participating in the tournament and enjoying the company of peers. This was observed across tournaments for specific staff gradings (e.g. senior advisors) as well as for functional teams (e.g. corporate tax), and confirmed by informal participant feedback.

After introducing a significant 'winner takes all' prize to a national tournament, we noted a clear change in the behaviours of tournament participants. While control groups were not used (this was not an academic study), there was a significant enough change to warrant noting and sharing. The events turned from social, party-like environments to silent, exam-like sessions.

This was not necessarily a negative outcome, just a different one.

The impact of financial rewards on behaviour of national tournament participants

	Tournament without financial rewards	Tournament with financial rewards
What we heard	Noisy conversations Laughter Heckling	Silence Brief, question-related whispers
What we saw	Smiles Energy and movement throughout the tournament	Faces of concentration Stillness during rounds
Response to occasional IT glitches	Ambivalence	Frustration Annoyance
Focus of participants	Using the tool and on other participants	Using the tool
Collaboration	Playful	Purposeful
Mood	Casual	Serious



While all tournament participants improved their awareness of the firm's offerings, the introduction of rewards influenced their behaviour.

Within gamified environments, rewards are commonly used to motivate and/or prompt users to influence their behaviour. We observed that by changing the nature of the reward, behaviours can be influenced quickly.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHERS

When considering how to motivate users for your gamified system, consider whether financial rewards are appropriate, the size of these rewards and the user behaviours that you are seeking to influence. More specific items for consideration include:

- Does fun matter to your project if people are engaged and using your tool?
- Consider how the value of financial incentives will influence interactions

between your employees, from being playful to purposeful, and whether this is a positive or negative experience for your users.

- Have you considered designing different experiences to attract staff using different motivators (social vs. financial)?
- You may not be able to have everything you want due to budget constraints – prioritise and move forward.

Gamers¹⁰ vs. non-gamers

It seems logical that gamers would be more likely to use an online, gamified tool. Conversely, this could lead you to also assume that 'non-gamers' are less likely to play. Why would gamification 'techniques' influence people who simply don't play games?

Such assumptions proved unfounded.

In our example, not only did a person's gaming status have a negligible impact on their participation, it also didn't influence the level of improvement in their awareness, or level of enjoyment of the game.

A word of caution – we found that hard core gamers (those individuals that play more than 10 hours of video games per week) showed very low levels of participation, making an assessment of their performance difficult.

Similar to millennial generation users, who had higher levels of video game use, hard core gamers commented on the comparison of the tool to commercially available gaming alternatives.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHERS

Concerns about gaming knowledge or ability as an obstacle to participation, performance and enjoyment may be unfounded.

If your population has a number of hard core gamers, expect a more significant engagement challenge.



10. The pre game survey asked our people to share the number of hours per week of video gaming with self and others. If a person provided a nil response, they are classified as a gamer. If a value was returned greater than nil, the individual is classified as a gamer.

Project management observations

The project management observations may have relevance for others managing gamification projects.



Convince your potential sponsor with strong fundamentals

This part is not a game. You need resources, and your business case needs to be centred on strong business fundamentals (strategic alignment, KPIs, ROI, risks, etc.). Practice pitch to the ‘grizzliest bear’ in the office – the older, more powerful and direct the better. Convincing your potential sponsor is your responsibility – your project will compete with others for limited resources.



Ensure you get a strong sponsor and business buy-in

The project sponsor must be respected by the business, be senior and a ‘believer’. Preferably they should be someone that sits across many functions. Keep in mind that business buy-in is not a one-off process, it is an activity that is required across the life of the project, and requires real effort.



Complete a thorough procurement process

Choosing the right organisation(s) to help is critical. An understanding of the different types of services offered by different vendors will help filter your vendor scan. Apart from technical capability, the importance of flexibility and cultural fit of the vendor should not be underestimated. From an internal perspective, ensure that the request for proposal you issue is clear, that you have an agreed scoring mechanism for both the written proposal and verbal presentations, and that your procurement panel is adequately skilled.



Identify and consider cross-business stakeholders

To give your project the best chance of success, you need to identify the people to engage across your business. Beyond the obvious functions like IT and Learning and Development, you may need to consider other functions, including brand (will the tool have branded images or logos?), privacy (what details of game performance are being captured?), communications (how will the release be communicated to staff?) and others. The project team will not only need to identify the required stakeholders but also realise that the project requirements will be in addition to an individual’s normal workload. Good relationships with cross-business stakeholders will help when unexpected requirements arise.



Stick to the plan

'You should include this in your game'... 'The game would help me greatly if you increased the capability this way...' 'Why won't you help me?'

Gamification projects can get people excited and this can result in pressure to expand the scope of the project. The project manager needs to be strong in delivering what has been promised in the business case, rather than what interested observers would like.



Develop a thick skin

Negativity towards a gamification project is always a strong possibility. Often this revolves around the belief that it is 'just a game' and that it will 'distract from real work'. For many, the word 'game' is an immediate issue. The project team must not only believe in the project but be supported at the highest levels.



Frame the project appropriately

When speaking with senior business stakeholders, we found that using the term 'tool' and discussing the progress against business outcomes (e.g. number of questions answered, percentage of improvement in awareness) was effective for framing the project. If conversations started by talking about the 'game', graphics or mechanics (unlocks, leaderboard), we were less able to have a serious discussion.



Look forward to the results

The results or insights you gather from the project may provide transparency on unknown issues or further information about known issues. These findings, while often unexpected, may provide help to others in your organisation looking to solve challenges. Where findings are not of a positive nature about a function or people, careful consideration is required of how, and to whom, you communicate these results.

In conclusion

We set out to build a tool that was fun and engaging to use and would help our people learn about the firm's service capabilities. We were able to achieve these objectives in our pilot project, with 80 percent of participants having fun playing, answering over 60,000 questions in a three-month period and observing a 21 percent improvement in awareness of the firm's capabilities.

Our gamification pilot took a 'dry' subject and delivered it in an engaging way, something that current text-based documentation and static intranet-based information could not accomplish.

In an environment where the majority of professional staff use smart phones and tablets on a daily basis, there is a greater expectation of more stimulating delivery and experiences. As this engagement expectation increases, the approach and tools that organisations use to engage people must also evolve.

We believe that applied appropriately, gamification has a role to play in helping to engage people, encourage behaviours and achieve specific objectives.



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