

Ruling the Playground: Five Gamification Concepts to Enhance the User Experience

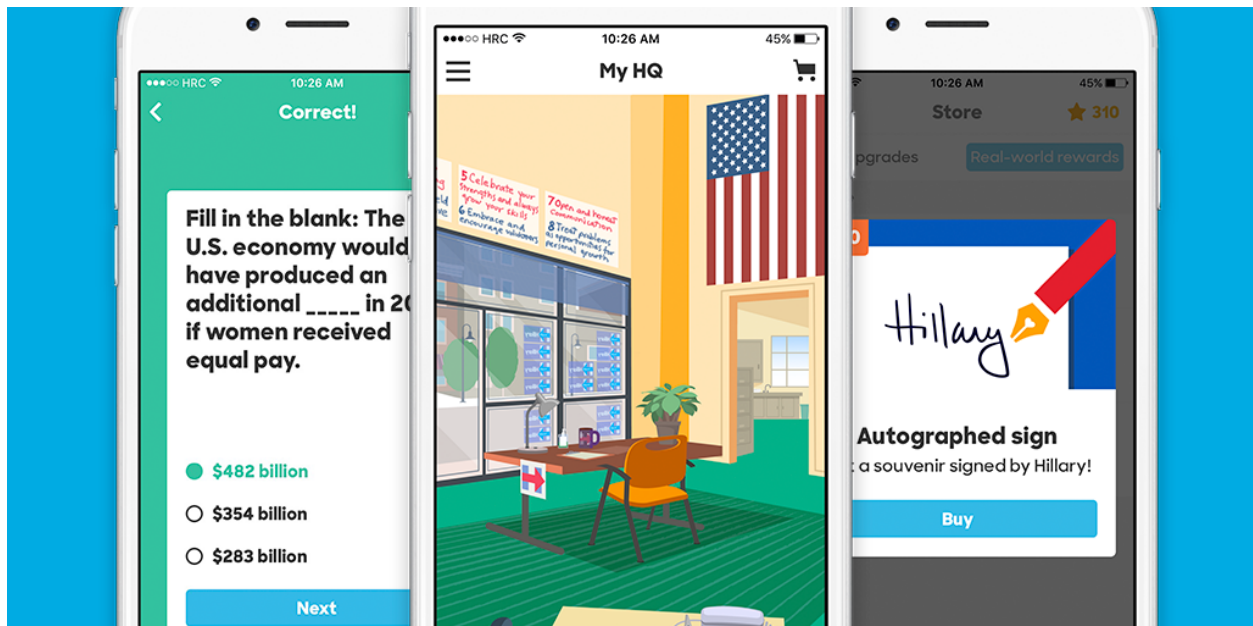


Gamification is a trend that has taken the digital world by storm, and its influence has exponentially risen over the past few years. Integrating gaming concepts into one's service is no longer looked at as merely aimless recreation, but as a proven way to [increase participation and drive consumer interest](#). Most importantly, it has become an effective way for brands to help their services consistently engage with their customers. It's one thing to convey information to a customer or to promote a product, but enabling a user to actually have fun while doing so helps a business reach an entirely new level. The combination of this and increased social media use among modern audiences has led to some enormously interactive campaigns and services. Utilizing apps with gamification concepts has helped brands create a more personalized, engaging experience with consumers, thus drastically enhancing the user experience.

This is accomplished through various interactive means, which all help to form an expertly-tailored experience for the user. The modern consumer wants to feel like their personal needs and desires are being met by the service they're using—even ones that correspond to recreation. These avenues toward customer interaction create more opportunities to engender interest with the user, consequently motivating them to spend more time with the service and build their loyalty. It's through these gamification concepts that the user experience reaches a whole new level

Incentivization

One key tenet of gamification is incentivization, or giving a user the ability to earn awards, badges, and other experience-based accolades over time. This motivates them and creates a sort of “snowball effect,” where collecting more awards encourages continued use on the part of the consumer, which unlocks more available achievements, then leading to even further usage, and so on. It is rooted in our psychology that we, as humans, are stimulated by being praised—even for little things. The concept of providing incentives for continued patronage creates a highly engaging experience for the consumer, because by reaching a certain level of achievement within the service, it is satisfying an emotional need and giving them a sense of accomplishment. This increases loyalty felt on the part of the consumer.



One example of this is Hillary Clinton’s “Hillary 2016” app that she’s using for her presidential campaign in the U.S. Though its primary focus is to drum up interest and awareness for her campaign, the app also recognizes the value of incentivization by [offering quizzes](#) to test knowledge of Democratic party policies, as well as measure their score. The app’s opening quote is: “The only thing standing between Donald Trump [her 2016 opponent] and the presidency is us.” This shows that mobile apps can create a call to action that unites people of a similar agenda, while still using gamification elements to help her supporters engage with her campaign in a recreational way.

These aforementioned awards or accolades can also lead to real-life discounts, benefits, or even free items. Certain e-commerce sites such as Kate Spade let users earn “points” when they like/favorite or share products with their friends, thus giving the user real monetary benefits through these gamified incentives. This is a two-pronged approach: engendering interest with gamification concepts, while also leading to actual purchases or sales.

ORDER HISTORY

FAVORITES

MY POINTS

CURRENT #

RULES

FAQ

UPDATED TERMS &
CONDITIONS

YOUR INFORMATION
IS SAFE WITH US

SECURITY &
PRIVACY POLICY

Have a question?

give us a ring at
866-999-5283—we're
here 24/7.

HI, RACHEL

YOU HAVE 26 POINTS!

YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY TO FREE KATE SPADE SATURDAY STUFF!
HERE ARE 3 EASY THINGS YOU CAN DO TO EARN MORE POINTS:

FAVORITE AN
ITEM YOU LOVE

1 PT

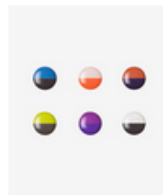
SHARE A PRODUCT
WITH FRIENDS

1 PT

INVITE A FRIEND
BY EMAIL (BELOW)

10 PTS

AND HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL GET



100 PTS
IPHONE BUTTON
STICKERS



300 PTS
THE WEEKEND
CALENDAR



500 PTS
TOP-HANDLE
COSMETIC CASE



2500 PTS
SQUARE BAG

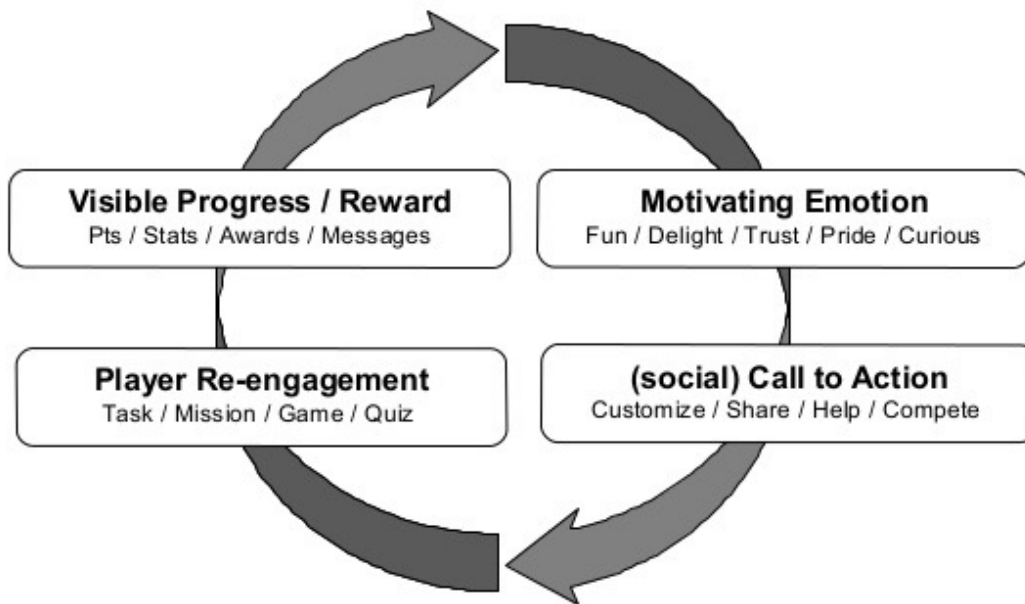


5000 PTS
THE SMALL
WEEKENDER BAG

Social Sharing

This leads to another critical component of gamification: social sharing between peers. Sharing content via social media platforms is but one aspect of this, as social media revolves around disseminating content and most apps nowadays have native social sharing features. [Interactivity is key](#), as the more a user can engage with content, the more that they personally value it, and are consequently encouraged to spread the word about it. In the context of gamification, users should not only be able to earn achievements, but to flaunt them on native or external social platforms. This will give them a sense of accomplishment amongst their peers, as well as entice others to join in the service after seeing the various accolades they can earn.

Social Engagement Loop



This type of social sharing goes through a cycle of social engagement, wherein satisfying an emotion encourages one to share, thus re-engaging the player and leading to further awards that satisfies even more emotional needs. This further influences the player to support the service, as well as encourage other users to avail themselves of the same. With all the positive news and attention this can drum up. After all, the wider the social spectrum that content is shared across, the larger the amount of interest it will generate.

Competition

Humans are a naturally competitive species. Indeed, **competition** is ingrained in our genetics, as we have historically quarreled over everything from food, to shelter, to natural resources. This concept extends to gamification, as [people often look for opportunities](#) to showcase their talent or skill set—so as to exhibit social dominance over their peers. But rather than doing so out of a biological need to show supremacy, people are doing it for fun.

Employee recognition is one example of this, as seen in [the recently-launched web service Workplayce.com](#). This internal recognition platform allows managers to apply accolades to staff mem-



bers such as “leadership excellence” or “marvelous multitasker,” enhancing the employee’s reputation and displaying their praise to other users to view. These awards are then available for all users to see, so they can potentially compare themselves to the award-earner and be inspired to work harder. Leaderboard access is also provided, in order to track and rank employees based on amount of recognitions received. This promotes a competitive atmosphere, while also enabling other employees to view rewards and to gauge their own performance in comparison.

The concept of sharing is also a sub-component of this, as communicating achievements to others only furthers the competitive atmosphere. In addition, it also encourages continued use of the service, so that the customer can attain the experience level that they desire and show it off to their peers—if only to prove who has the better skills. But as we saw, this concept corresponds to much more than friendly, recreational competition. It can even affect matters like work output, or employee collaboration.

Personalization

The concept of **personalization** corresponds to specific user experiences tailored to key audience segments. This subsequently increases the bond between brand and consumer; with personalization, the former gets a better idea of what their audience wants, while the latter gets to have an experience that more closely fits their needs. The social gamification expert Amy Jo Kim once said that [it’s impera-](#)

[tive to understand the “social style” of players and the differences between demographics](#), i.e. males and females, younger and older people, etc. Female players may wish to use a service to collaborate more and share content with each other, while male players may wish to use it compete with each other for bragging rights. While apps with gamification may be available to a wide range of people, it would not do any good to have services that appeal to only a single, broad segment of the population. Certain demographics may feel left out, as there would be no feeling of an individualized user experience. It is the concept of personalization experience which staves off this predicament.

The [Audi A3 social media campaign back in 2013](#) is one of the best examples of how to use personalized, gamified experience to encourage consumers engagement with brands. Using email, social media, and other resources, Audi allowed individual users to take the new A3 for a virtual “test drive” through a microsite. Not only was this a fun activity for the user, but in the process the company recorded over 100,000 visitors, and was able to form personalized user profiles of the participants.

Localization is another component of this, wherein an app utilizes a cell phone’s GPS locator to create a customized experience based on the user’s location. In a pure sales sense, a company may announce a sale going on at its various stores. However, the exact amount of discount may differ depending on the location. How would a person know which sales their nearby store participated in, or the exact amount of the discount? Location means everything to the modern business looking to keep their customers informed. The aforementioned “Hillary 2016” app utilizes GPS in order to inform users of local events and invite friends to participate in them. The app can detect the user’s location via GPS and then provide event news depending on where the user is.

When the aforementioned recreational facets of the experience are uniquely tailored to the individual consumer, everybody wins. Customer engagement is increased, and businesses generate more interest and sales by endeavoring to fit every possible desire of the consumer.



Virtual and Augmented Reality

This is a newer concept that is emerging within the context of gamification over the last year or two. This doesn't correspond merely to VR glasses like Facebook's Oculus Rift or Microsoft's HoloLens. This applies to any app or service that incorporates artificially-constructed elements into the creation of an either partially or completely virtual environment, which the user can then experience through their own eyes. As with many other concepts of gamification, Pokemon Go has led the way, enriching the user's surroundings and letting them explore a fully-realized universe. Apple has even declared augmented reality "[a core technology](#)" in its future plans. The opportunity to explore a wider array of virtual surroundings is a captivating possibility, as humans naturally become disinterested when they see the same thing day after day. Virtual and augmented reality alleviates this in a big way.



Not only can this concept be used for fun, such as with games like Pokemon Go or Zombies, Run, but they can even be used for education. [EON Exploration AVR is even utilizing these gamification concepts](#) to aid students in learning about anatomy, geography, biology, and other subjects. The designer Allison Crank also [unveiled plans for a Virtual Reality mall](#) last year, which would offer the user access to fashion events, as well as a virtual fitting room to "try on" clothes. This technology offers the user a wider variety of options than one would have in standard reality. Such an experience enhances the bond between the user and the service they are using that much more.

Conclusion

Consumers who are taking the time to use your app are already engaged with your web service, so such aforementioned gamification concepts can foster an even larger amount of interest by playing upon the concept of recreation. More importantly, it can influence others in order to join in the service via shared content, consequently convincing others to take part in the activities and features that it offers. Things like gradually unlockable features, an award hierarchy, and personalized news/events can provide more reasons to continually use the product. This creates an individualized experience that is practically a necessity in this day and age, creating a personalized environment for the user. This adds immense value to an app's functionality, and most importantly, creates a fun customer experience where the user doesn't feel like they're taking part in a service, but rather, playing a game. Indeed, it's the duty of every modern service to make sure that the customer is not only availing themselves of a service, but having fun while doing so.