Gamification in Business: Designing Motivating Solutions to Problem Situations

Deborah Gears
Rochester Institute of Technology
Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences
Rochester, NY 14623 USA
dgcics@rit.edu

Karen Braun
Xerox Innovation Group, Xerox Corporation
Webster, NY 14580 USA
karen.braun@xerox.com

Abstract
Designing a gamified solution to a difficult business problem requires informed application of game design patterns, with an understanding of the unique corporate environment. We present a framework that can be applied in other gamified endeavors. Our approach includes a systems-oriented process describing environmental conditions affecting intrinsic motivation and game design patterns. Objectives considered the 16 basic human desires [11], along with the human need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness [4].

Author Keywords
Gamification; motivative interaction design; game design patterns; collaborative engagement; problem solving

ACM Classification Keywords
H.5.m [Information Interfaces and Presentation (e.g., HCI)]: Miscellaneous; K.8.0 [Personal Computing]: Games; J.4 [Social and Behavioral Sciences]: Psychology, Sociology

General Terms
Design, Theory

Introduction
Our research introduces a gamification design model aimed at improving project staffing in business. Goals were not focused on delivering “fun”, rather to offer a positive and engaging experience deemed interesting and important to employees. Approaches addressing the primary research question, “Do applied game elements improve a problem situation?” eventually led to founding of a gamification process and motivation framework.

Once the business problem and common language were established, the project followed “game” design advice of Schell [15]. Numerous brainstorming sessions were
hosted where we “documented everything we could think of” (p. 71); game design principles alone were insufficient. In games, players are generally compelled to play for intrinsic reasons. In the corporate context, additional considerations were necessary to give a positive, connected experience beyond just building a game and hoping people would play. Object-oriented systems development processes were customized to include contextual elements and psychological needs of employees. A gamified use case and class diagram provided structure to align game design patterns with operational conditions and employee motivation factors. This paper highlights key milestones along our path to gamification design.

Theoretical Foundations
Our evolving gamification design model emerged from a study of corporate wiki collaboration [7]. Two intrinsic motivation theories guided an understanding of psychological aspects associated with participation behavior. Specifically, the theory of 16 basic desires [11] was employed to understand innate human desires, and the self-determination theory [4] to understand internally regulated action along a spectrum of extrinsic motivation. The motivation theory along with foundations for collaborative engagement in business, are introduced below.

Theory of 16 Basic Desires
The theory of 16 basic desires [11], a psychological content theory of motivation, provides utility for analyzing and predicting human behavior. Reiss' model, derived from Maslow's [10] theory of human needs, and William James' [9] theory of internal desires, describes basic desires for: Order, Power, Independence, Curiosity, Acceptance, Saving, Idealism, Honor, Social Contact, Family, Status, Vengeance, Romance, Eating, Physical Activity, and Tranquility. While basic desires are largely genetic in nature, the manner in which humans act upon these desires is shaped by the intensity of innate desire, cultural influences, and individual experiences. Intensity of each individual's desires falls on a spectrum, assessed using the Reiss Profile of Fundamental Goals and Motivational Sensitivities.

Self-Determination Theory
The self-determination theory (SDT) [4] framed a motivation model for understanding what and how human behavior is initiated and regulated [4,13,14]. The SDT recognizes social and environmental conditions that affect personal volition and engagement in activities. The SDT combines both content (psychological needs) and process (cognition) motivation describing needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. An individual’s motivation for action is defined along a spectrum of amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation measured by perceived locus of causality (external to internal regulation) [6]. Needs for autonomy and competence allow the “prediction of the social circumstances and task characteristics that enhance versus diminish intrinsic motivation” [3 p. 233].

Collaborative Engagement Foundations
In a study of wiki collaboration in the workplace, Gears [7] employed both the theory of 16 basic desires [11], and the SDT [4], to understand factors motivating employee participation behaviors. Strong basic desires for power, independence, idealism, and curiosity were found to prompt engagement behaviors such as adding,
changing, and commenting on content. Contextual influences were associated with participation and non-participation wiki behavior along the SDT continuum ranging from external control to internal autonomy. Deployed in a grassroots and egalitarian manner, employees participated in the wiki when they perceived value, were not concerned about malicious wiki behavior, found time to participate, and for some, received support from their manager.

**Approach**

Our multidisciplinary team began with analysis of candidate business problems. Several challenged areas were identified and evaluated for risk, benefit, scope, impact, and feasibility. Following numerous interviews, focus group discussions, analysis, and design team collaborations, a business situation was targeted for gamification.

Our understanding of gamification followed Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, and Nacke [5], defined as a process that incorporates game design elements in non-game contexts to improve the user experience, and in this research, improve a challenging situation. The consequence of gamification was not a complete game, rather purposefully deployed game design patterns [1] in conjunction with psychological motivation theory, and environmental conditions. Conversations about design elements (independent building blocks) centered on game design patterns used in gameplay.

**Systems Analysis and Design**

An object-oriented systems analysis and design process was instrumental in guiding the project. Use cases, class diagrams, and process models were developed to gain understanding of the domain, define requirements, and design gameful interactions.

A “gamified” essential use case [2] (refer to Table 1) specified goals, objectives, beneficiaries, business rules, behavioral norms, preconditions, actors, and system interactions. The use case provided a canvas to articulate business rules that could not be broken; personal, social, and corporate norms that could be challenged; and conditions necessary for a successful outcome.

| GAMIFICATION USE CASE
| Goals: Primary purpose(s) of the experience. |
| 1) Improve the problem situation,
2) Stimulate interest, increase communication, reduce frustration,
3) Create a gamified environment that would be taken seriously by employees. |
| Objectives: Derivable accomplishments offered in the experience. |
| 1) Freedom and motivation to provide input into the process (autonomy) [4],
2) Feel a sense of accomplishment towards the business goal (competence) [4],
3) Feel a shared sense of purpose (relatedness) [4],
4) Allow opportunity to participate without negatively impacting employees. |
| Business Rules: Constraints or policy that cannot be broken. |
| 1) Managers make the final disposition. |
| Behavioral Norms: Personal, social, and corporate norms that can be challenged. |
| 1) Content ownership norm – ownership of corporate documentation belongs to the author [7]. |
| Preconditions: Circumstances the domain that must be true before interactions to enable positive outcome. |
| 1) Participation is not required [7].
2) Participation should NOT be directly related to pay and performance.
3) Non-participants are NOT negatively impacted.\
4) Participants recognize the value of the experience [7].
5) Participants are given time to participate [7].
6) Participants are not concerned about misconduct or abuse by others [7].
7) The established environment is egalitarian (open, democratic, free of hierarchy and dictatorial control, etc.) [7].
8) Managers support participation [7]. |
| Actors: Performers involved in the problem domain. |
| 1) Project Contributor
2) Project Manager. |

Table 1. Gamified Use Case
Objectives considered the human need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness [4]. Behavioral Norms and Preconditions considered domain settings associated with participation behaviors in open corporate wikis [6,7]. It is conceivable that the preconditions could apply in any gamified design.


Over time, the class diagram became a de facto game board where employees were referred to as players, responsibilities as actions, and the problem domain as a playing field. An intentional detour from systems thinking evoked a shift in mindset from business to game play, balancing creative thinking with corporate reality.

Framework for Gamified Design

A Role-Motivation-Interaction Framework (RMI) was introduced to facilitate the architecting of gameful interactions (refer to Figure 1). Designers projected the “basic desires” of employee described by Reiss [11]. This recognition, along with acknowledgement of employee/player psychological need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness [4,12] aided in the selection and customization of game design patterns [1] (specified in the Use Case Normal Course of Action). Consideration of intrinsic desires and extrinsic motivators created opportunity to design for meaningful choice. “Meaningful choice” in this context intends to stimulate a sense of employee inclusion and perceived benefit to the situation, without negatively affecting pay, performance, and relationships.

Token Placement (refer to table 2) was selected to satisfied the desire for Acceptance, Idealism and Power by Project Contributors. Indicating n number of interest tokens, employees satisfy basic desires for inclusion (Acceptance), a sense of fairness and to promote ideas (Idealism), and to pursue challenges (Power). Participation is not required preserving autonomy when employees identify with an initiative to express interest.

Employees feel a sense of competence through manipulation of the tool and knowledge in a project area, and relatedness through community collaboration.
and inclusion. A surprise or reward for expression of interest(s) supports the desire for competence, mastery, and acceptance.

Conclusion
This research proposed a gamified system development process and role-motivation-interaction framework designed to improve a problem situation in business. The 16 basic human desires [11], along with the human need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness [4] anchored the framework influenced by corporate dynamics. Game design patterns [1] were customized to offer employees a positive and engaging experience.

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References