GAMIFICATION:
POKÉMON FOR EMPLOYERS

Two-thirds of employees are disengaged, and nearly two-thirds of Americans play video games regularly. So, are employees disengaged because they'd rather be playing video games? Nope, the numbers are likely just a coincidence, but the research that links games and employee engagement isn't. Turning everyday tasks into games—called gamification—can fuel motivation and will almost certainly create a workplace culture your competitors will envy.

BUT, REALLY, MY EMPLOYEES AREN'T GAMERS.
If you look past "gamer" stereotypes and poll your employees, you might be surprised by what you uncover. In the U.S., 60% of Americans play video games daily, and 70% of those gamers are age 18 or older. And it's not just a boys' club; 45% of U.S. gamers are women. And what's more, many employees who don't play video games are still motivated by the desire to best an opponent! In other words: A lot of your workers are into games.

WHAT DOES GAMIFICATION IN THE WORKPLACE LOOK LIKE?
First things first, let's clear up one common misconception: Presenting your onboarding or training material in JEOPARDY! format is not gamification. Gamification is a holistic approach to rewarding people for exhibiting desired behaviors by encouraging them to complete specific, voluntary tasks that are not part of their normal behavior patterns. In order to change a behavior, three things need to happen:

- A situation or event must trigger the desired behavior.
- A person must have the physical/mental capability to complete the desired behavior.
- A person must be motivated to complete the desired behavior.

Gamification aids in behavioral change by creating an environment that makes it rewarding to exhibit the desired behavior. A gamification program has:

- A defined goal with defined rewards.
- Well-established rules on how to achieve the goal and reap the rewards.
- A mechanism for measuring a player's progress or a rank in the game.
- Voluntary participation. (In other words, exhibiting the desired behavior can't be a basic condition of employment.)

HOW DOES GAMIFICATION WORK?
Gamification improves motivation by creating new and exciting triggers. By using game mechanics (points, levels, missions, and leaderboards) and dynamics (achievement, collaboration, surprise, and suspense), you create a work experience that makes once-humdrum tasks fun and meaningful. For example, a good game would not reward a salesperson for making a sale (because making a sale is a condition of employment), but a good game might encourage and reward a customer service representative for responding to a product inquiry within minutes instead of hours or days because speed equates to higher sales, and higher sales is the desired outcome for the company.

GAMES NEED PRIZES, RIGHT?
Not necessarily. Think back to your family Monopoly tournaments. You didn't care about a prize. You cared about winning. You cared about snagging Boardwalk before your brother. You cared about the game. This is because
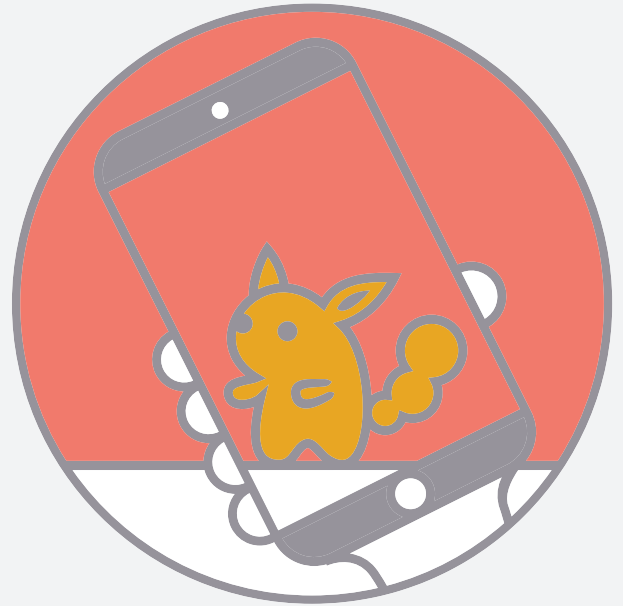
gamification unlocks powerful intrinsic motivation factors (autonomy, mastery, purpose, progress, and social interaction).

And though studies show extrinsic rewards (prizes) pale in comparison to intrinsic motivators, sometimes prizes are nice—especially when a gamification program is brand new and you need employees to adopt the program. Here's one piece of advice if you choose to adopt a prize program: It's best to stay away from financial incentives. As soon as money is thrown into the mix, the game ceases to be about fun and feels like another aspect of work. Money also creates a sense of loss of income when it is taken away or is not earned, and that is never motivating.

BEWARE OF THE ELECTRONIC WHIP!

In 2008, Disney tried to use gamification to decrease the time it took to process a load of laundry. The game was a colossal failure.

Disney placed scoreboards around the laundry facilities in its hotels and highlighted employee names in green, yellow, and red based on their speed. Additionally, each laundry machine flashed red or yellow lights if employees weren't working fast enough. Employees called the flashing lights and color-coded monitors an "electronic whip." Ouch! And although the laundry was completed more quickly, it happened at the expense of a breakdown in workplace congeniality and an increase of on-the-job injuries.

The game was horribly demotivating because it doled out punishments to non-performing employees instead of celebrating the achievements of employees who exhibited the desired behavior.

CREATING AND BUILDING A GAMIFICATION PROGRAM SOUNDS LIKE A LOT OF WORK …

It is. A good gamification strategy will take time and a lot of careful planning to successfully implement. But industry studies show you could expect the following results:

· Up to 10% increase in customer satisfaction.
· An increase of 18% in sales.
· An increase of 81% in collaboration.
· An increase of 373% in learning engagement.

It might be worth all that effort, right?

View more of our publications at ElwoodThinks.com

elwood staffing®
The better people, people.®