Gamification: Ushering the Way to Workplace Happiness Via Discretionary Effort

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Abstract

As we are in the midst of a major transformation in the workplace, employers face an increasingly dynamic, technologically-enabled global workplace. These days business issues are even more complex than the ones faced previously and entail more comprehensive solutions. An organization that will try hard to attract and retain superlative talent, there are innumerable forces at play that are dramatically impacting the workplace and the employee experience. Previously organization has presumed that they can create a place where they assumed people needed to work there and are now comprehending that they must create a place where people want to work. From mere employees and resources, employers began embracing the attitude that they ought to elevate the employee experience and make it a priority. In an effort to make a positive experience at work, employers have deployed a wide range of practices that are intended to improve the affective experience of employees. So, to supercharge employee experience, organizations are experimenting with "Gamification" in the workplace. But then again implementing gamification inside a workplace can be a tricky proposition. Innovation and transformation can make anyone trepidatious, particularly for employees who have become accustomed to accomplishing their work with a specific goal in mind and may restrict new innovation. In this way, the discretionary effort of the workforce is the crown jewel. The best association instances of conquering affliction can be followed to employees who went above and beyond at work. Therefore, Gamification can be a smart rejoinder to workplace happiness through discretionary effort.

Keywords: Gamification, Discretionary Effort, Workplace Happiness, Employee Experience

Introduction

In the world of Human Resource (HR), employee experience has been an emerging trend. Toiling for the entire workweek from 9 am to 5 pm is not that an easy task. Most of the time, it is observed that the grouchy employees scowl at their desktops the entire day and run out of the door as soon as they sign off. The employee often feels unhappy due to work fretfulness, workplace politics, gossip, etc. So, employee experience is in general taken to encapsulate the things employees encounter, experience, and feel in their working life. Countless studies and investigations came out on employee engagement, yet recently a shift is happening, and employee experience gaining steam. Organizations are prioritizing employee experience at the workplace and discarding traditional methods as they saw no value in them. As employees are starting to quantify their employment not just by the size of their pay-check yet in addition to how they feel inside the organization. The change in workforce demography creates new demands as employees are expecting more engaging and enjoyable work experiences.

Human resource managers have deployed a wide range of inventiveness to improve the working experience for employees. Consequently, the human resource departments turn up with the concept of "Gamification", introducing elements from games into the workplace to improve employees' affective experiences. Gamification is one of the newest techniques to perk up on the traditional mode of work and is one-way employers are making work for employees more enjoyable. It's a new-fangled mode to engage and recognize high performing employees. The idea behind gamification is that games lead people to feel better at work. Gamification is not only intended to make the work more interesting in and of itself but is also focused on improving the employee's affective experience at work. Gamification is making the environment more exciting and

thus increasing the positive affect employees feel at work. Within learning or working contexts, gamification can be a powerful solution to address motivational problems, provided that organizations have to well design and built upon entrenched implementation models of gamification.

The purpose of this paper is to address and examine how Gamification triggers a gameful experience among the employees and how organizations canshapetheir employee experience by implementing gamification in the workplace. Also, the papertries to establishthe relevance of discretionary effort of employees in implementing gamification techniques which can lead the way to workplace happiness.

Gamification

The term gamification was coined in 2002 by British-born game programmer Nick Pelling (Marczewski, 2013). Gamification is a catchphrase that gets tossed around incessantly, and it has been the centre of attention since the beginning of the 2010s (Deterding, Dixon, et al., 2011; Werbach & Hunter, 2012). Gamification refers to the "use of game elements and techniques in nongame contexts" (Deterding et al., 2011b)."Gamification mechanics are the foundational aspects of gamified experience: they determine who the key parties are, how they interact, how to win or lose, and where and when the experience takes place" (Robson, 2015). By transferring game design elements to non-game environments, gamification injects the motivational potential of video games in workplaces (Deterding, Khaled, Nacke& Dixon, 2011).It plays on the psychology that steers human engagement. According to Juul (2005) a gameas "a rule-based system with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where different outcomes are assigned different values, the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome, the player feels emotionally attached to the outcome, and the consequences of the activity are negotiable". Kapp (2012) delineated a game as "a system in which players engage in an abstract challenge, defined by rules, interactivity, and feedback, that results in a quantifiable".

Gamification is used by organizations for the three main reasons for "changing behaviours, developing skills, and driving innovation" (Burke 37). Malone (1982) explores how features that make computer games captivating can be implemented to create different, non-game interfaces exciting and enjoyable to use.The appliance of gamification in work practices provides a revolutionary way of improving on traditional evaluation methods.Although games invoke excitement and fun which may lead to positive affect associated with work as well as improved performance. Werbach (2013) emphasizes that gamification is more than just rewards and points and is actually a method to change employee and motivate them in a "gameful way".In the midst of increased social media usage, the popularity of mobile apps and numerous stirring games, fascinate people more than ever before to stay connected and play games. Gamification can be used as a part of an engagement and performance solution tool which creates a positive employee experience by encouraging a team-based engagement, shaping a culture of empowerment, and enhancing efficiency. "The application of gaming metaphors to real life tasks to influence behaviour, improve motivation and enhance engagement" (Marczewski, 2013).

The aim of gamification is to engage people with positive actions and modify their behaviour over time to meet organizational goals. "Gamification emotions are the mental affective states and reactions evoked among individual players when they participate in a gamified experience" (Robson, 2015). A successful gamified process consists of connecting business goals with improvement, achievements and rewards, progress tracking, frequent feedback and flawlessly timing the deliverance of information to prevent information overload. According to Gartner, the main goals of gamification are to get users engaged at their higher level, change their behaviours and also stimulate innovation in work and practices (Gartner, 2011).The aspiration for executing these concepts is to persuade participation while keeping employees motivated. Thus, the fundamental idea is simple, if individual spin their life into a game with digital rewards for real life achievements, they will be more motivated to do something or so the theory goes. The gamification worksand winsin today's workplace.

In this cognitive era, people are at the vanguard of working with and realizing the benefits of new-fangled technologies to pull off more than was ever possible before. What and how gamification can do for processes in Human Resource Management, is a daunting question for every organisation these days. In order to an application of gamification at work, the literature suggests that specific game mechanics or components need to be in place. Amongst components acknowledged by Werbach and Hunter (2012), five components namely points, badges, leaderboards, performance graphs and avatars are discussed in this paper.

a.Points are a basic game element, which can be accumulated by users through taking part in certain activities within the gamified environment, and are commonly used as a motivator for users to reach certain goals (Werbach & Hunter, 2012; Sailer et al., 2013). Another aspect that points excel in is providing feedback, which is a key element of good game design (Werbach &

Hunter, 2012).

b. A badge as "a visual representation of an achievement with the gamified process" (Werbach and Hunter, 2012). Badges are earned when a player opts for certain routes and challenges which are associated with those badges (Wang & Sun, 2011).

c. Leaderboards rank players by estimating them against a predeterminedachievement standard (Costa, Wehbe, Robb &Nacke, 2013). The performance is visible across organizations through the leaderboard. It creates pride and status symbol amongst employees to encourage their better contribution. As well as it also encourages constructive competition. By seeing a co-worker up in the leaderboard hierarchy trigger off others to get active and contribute more to gain rank.

d. Performance graphs are oftenutilized in simulation or strategy games. It equates the player's performance to their earlier performance during a game (Sailer et al., 2013).

e. Avatars are visual representations of players within a gamified environment (Werbach & Hunter, 2012). Avatars enable the players to adopt or create a graphical identity of themselves in a game (Annetta, 2010).

In a nutshell, it can be stated that it is no longer a myth that the implication of gamification in the workplace has significantly helped the employees to create an environment in which the employees feel recognized and rewarded for their accomplishments, even beyond compensation and benefits. The employees are linked with the business goals and the achievements are expanded beyond points, badges and leaderboards. It is a time when work can be a more rewarding experience for employees. Using game design and human psychology to drive desired business outcomes such as increased productivity, employee engagement. Hence, gamification in the workplace can be a powerful tool for HR leaders to achieve organizational effectiveness by enhancing the employee experience.

Shift from Employee Engagement to Employee Experience

Throughout the lifecycle of employment, the first interaction with a new employee lasts until the last day of work for that employee.Workforce and workplace trends that are catalysing the need for employers to rethink conventional methods of operating are the prime challenge in today's business environment. With the evolution of cloud and mobile computing, augmented automation, and agile workplaces, employees are now expecting more engaging and enjoyable work experiences and employers are looking to create human-first experiences for their employees. In a nutshell, employees, especially now are looking for the experience of work. Ad nauseam, employers have not contemplation about the experience an employee has while employed by the organization. It cannot be said that the contemplation hasn't been considered by the employer, but the fact is "Employee experience" never been a defined concept. Employee experience is all about concocting a modified employee journey as well as it is a new enduring and big-picture focused. From an employee's perspective, can be start to finish, from recruitment to retirement.Rolling out little improvements that sway employee morale and motivation is noteworthy. As employees seek the workplace experience, actually they are searching for an individual experience.By enhancing the workplace environment to be more enjoyable and make work less tedious, Gamification can control certain variables to enhance the work experience (Sarangi & Shah, 2015). But each and every employee is different and their expectations also different. Though there are similarities that exist from individual to individual but taken as a whole, those likenessessallow in comparison to the differences that exist. An employee experience strategy is required to focus on the individual and not the workforce body altogether. Hence,game design patterns were personalized to offer employees a positive and engaging experience (Hamari, 2017; Hammedi et al., 2017).

For quite a long time, employees have grumbled about nepotism, nonappearance of feedback, nonexistence of precision, shadowy goals and all the other negative things that kill the obligation of employees and corporate culture all around. But in recent times the movement that started to revolutionize business practices, making a strong case for human-centered innovation. Thus, the idea of gamification has been used for uplifting employee self-confidence by creating a transparent and fun environment helping them in problem solving (Hammedi et al., 2017). In a perspective of rare talent and global competition, business frontrunners of tomorrow will unquestionably be those organizations who harness their employee experience. In organizations, gamification involves managerially-imposed games designed to improve employees' affective experiences of work and motivate them to work harder (Edery&Mollick, 2009; Deterding et al., 2011).The change will be essential for future success, but let go of traditional outlooks of work and approaches will not be easy. But the most important thing an organization should forget while implementing a gamified system is about their employee participation. Whether the employees perceive the gamified system as amusing or whether they are likely to engage and apply their effort in the tasks presented as games. Consequently, the employees need to use their discretionary effort to

implement and accept gamification or gamified culture in their organization.

The Significance of Discretionary Effort in Implementing Gamification

Gamification impacts the intrinsic nature of people to influence discretionary effort. Employees learn by doing and often experience new ways of seeing or approaching workplace problems and relationships. Marshall (1890) used discretion for depicting the freedom of choice of the reader. Barnard (1938) described discretionas of the area of power or authority. The term discretion is also quoted in Katz (1964), Katz and Kahn (1978). Discretion might refer to 'judgment'. The usage of the term discretion in the context of judgment can be traced back to Leibenstein (1966). According to Leibenstein, "A good deal is left to custom, authority, and whatever motivational techniques are available to management as well as to individual discretion and judgment." Hawkins sees discretion as a tool for the legal and administrative officials to give effect to the law. According to the Oxford Companion to Law, "discretion" is "the faculty of deciding or determining in accordance with circumstances and what seems just, right, equitable, and reasonable in those circumstances." From the above understanding of discretion, the overall term discretionary effort can be conceptualized. Discretionary effort is a performance where the salesperson goes beyond his/her prescribed duties of the job (Dubinsky A. J., Skinner S. J., 2002). When the elements of gamification are added to training and development, a great way of influencing discretionary effort opens up. The online and offline game elements are used to ensure that learned content is purposely tried and embedded into daily work practice (Funk, 1993). These activities specifically target the use of discretionary effort. When participants are given time to reflect on their career and identify and to refocus their values and strengths, they naturally ignite their discretionary effort and re-energise, as they contemplate their future career path within the organisation (Steinkuehler, 2010). Employees get a feeling of accomplishment when they participate in a program and complete course modules for earning the badges, leaderboard rankings. Their progress when shared on social media gains further encouragement and praise (Hung & Yuen, 2010). Employees when given feedback immediately for their performance, experience a game like environment. Thus, it encourages them to improve their performance next time. Video game techniques and social networking is used to engage employees to find new solutions to their work-related problems, in a gamified environment. Video game and social networking have registered a high-interest rate among people (Squire,

2005). Thus, employees engaged by these techniques might display an increased level of discretionary effort and which is the secret sauce to a happy workplace.

Workplace Happiness: The Upshot of Gamified Workplace

Employers need to engage employees in such a way that they don't just sign up for the job, they sign up for the entire ride.Most of the organizations need to deal with massive employee extrication resulting partly from a disparity between the processes in place and employee expectations. Most of us have all had those employments where we simply couldn't get propelled. Possibly the assignments were unexciting or uninspiring. Henceforth in those cases, employees muddled through.

In the point of fact, this is a question for more or less all digital transformation today that how much tech to embed and how much work to keep human. The right balance of gamification to keep the employees engaged, but not stressed. Employee splurges most of their lives at work, thus why shouldn't it be fun. So, it can be said that "Happiness at Work is about mindfully making the best use of the resources one has to overcome the challenge one is facing" (Edmunds & Pryce-Jones, 2008). Happiness comes into sights in the form of joy and is an indispensable human emotion, feeling happy is essential to experience as human (Diener & Diener, 1996). By and large happiness at work has revealed positive relationships with job satisfaction and performance (Judge et al., 2005; Crede et al., 2007; Fisher, 2010) and negative relationships with burnout (Iverson, Olekalns, & Erwin, 1998) and turnover intentions (Van Katwyk et al., 2000) which takes place whenemployees are not necessarily contented or engaged with the work they were doing. It's easy to feel disengaged if an employer never communicates with their employee. Emails and social media sites are one way to facilitate this, but face-to-face communication is always the best way to get your message across. Therefore, in that case, employers should be responsive to the benefits of creating an environment that promotes happiness because their organizations will be benefited from increases in productivity and employee retention (Proudfoot et. al., 2009). Gamification aims to change all that and embed workplacehappiness. "Happiness at work is a function of engagement, morale, and satisfaction" (Stoehr, 2012). In this era of digital transformation, the opportunities to implement gamification to assist employees to acclimatize themselves learn, and nurture is almost endless. Gamification has the power to ramp up the workplace even when the job consists of monotonous tasks. But at the end of the day, it's the employee who has to adopt this in their work culture. And it's also the obligation of the employer

who is solely accountable for creating this change in the workplace. The positive leader behaviour is one that includes the willingness to listen to the employee's opinion, and a tendency to support and show appreciation for employees and their work (Warr, 2007). The gamified workplace has the capability to emerge as a well-established synonym of the term workplace happiness.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that gamification is an emergent trend in employee engagement that exploits a digital environment to help workforce accomplish certain goals and objectives. It can make the workforce engaged, efficient and creative in a fun, easy, and accessible way. Better job performance, increased discretionary effort and higher retention are the result of positive employee experience. But without employee's discretionary exertion all effort to make a workplace gamified will go in vain. It is observed that employees are happier and do better when working in teams become fun quotient. They perform well when they are connected with the community of learning within the entire organization. Most of these things can't be implemented with rules or circulars but can be achieved with a game. A gamified environment makes the employee impart discretionary effort in a learning process. Therefore, gamification is thewell-turned-out retort to workplace happiness.

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