



## There is no gamification without goals

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Gamification is no stranger to the business world. Most business stakeholders know they need it to engage employees and partners but also find it challenging to develop and execute effective programs.

Many find out quickly that simply adding badges or leaderboards to a website without a business objective yields less than desired results. In fact, **Gartner® Hype Cycle™ for Frontline Worker Technologies, 2021<sup>i</sup>** states:

**“Organizations must recognize that simply including game mechanics is not enough to realize the core benefits of gamification.”**

The fun of adding game mechanics to work environments is only part of the process—gamification needs business goals to thrive.

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Since gamification is so ubiquitous to our digital ecospheres (think progress bars on an Apple Watch or levels on your favorite airline app), it is easy to think building an engaging gamification program is intuitive. Oftentimes game mechanics will be added to a platform and companies will hope their audience finds the experience entertaining enough to keep coming back. Can you imagine sticking with a game, or more importantly, a job, without knowing what to do to succeed? Of course not – and that’s why it’s necessary to have clear goals, both for the business and individuals participating, at the foundation of a gamification program.

There are three areas to focus on when building a gamification program: goals, audience and activities. To start, determine the organizational problems that need to be solved. The program must be tied to a goal or opportunity you want to drive. Are you trying to onboard people to new processes faster? Drive more sales? Retain more people in a learning program? Knowing the goals makes it easier to define who needs to participate, what activities that audience should be completing and how to measure a return on investment. The best gamification programs are mutually beneficial. The program clearly indicates to the people participating “What’s in it for me?” Will I learn something new? Will I be better at a skill that impacts my career? Will I be rewarded with something that excites me like a unique experience? Establishing your goals will allow the program to be focused on people completing the most desired activities at the right time, for the right incentive.

Next up, identify the audience. This seems obvious but with how dynamic and diverse our workforces can be, it is sometimes hard to pinpoint who needs to be included in a gamification program to make it successful. Take the goal of reducing onboarding of a new hire as an example. Obviously, we need new employees in the program but it is also well known that managers make a big impact on a new hire’s journey. Understanding that



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the goal is to reduce the friction a new hire faces, and that managers impact that objective, the managers also need to have an opportunity to participate in the gamification program. Having two different roles in the same program changes how a leaderboard is structured, who has the opportunity to collect badges or how points might be distributed.

Finally, establish which activities need to be included in your gamification program to drive the game mechanics. Once the goals and audience are defined, it becomes a lot easier to identify the activities and behaviors you want to motivate. Take time to consider all the different investments you have made across your digital ecosphere and how they can be incorporated into your gamification program to drive the best results. Oftentimes people think about gamification in an isolated platform; for example, when adding gamification to a learning management system. But what happens after someone has been trained? With a goal-focused approach, gamification can be applied to the training and the performance goals the training was made to reinforce.

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Every gamification program is unique but all gamification programs exist to motivate the people participating to increase adoption, engagement and retention. The best way to ensure the effectiveness of a program is to tie the addition of game mechanics to organizational goals. Having goals at the center of the gamification journey allows participants to clearly understand the objective of the program and for organizations to measure the effectiveness of the audience's efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> Gartner, "Hype Cycle for Frontline Worker Technologies, 2021", Leif-Olof Wallin, July 6, 2021.

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