

Gamification in Learning

Gamification is becoming an important and significant tool in the realm of learning. This article talks about what Gamification means and what it brings to the learner and how it's changing the way learning is happening in current times.



Gamification is the art and science of applying game design thinking to applications that are not really game driven to make them more engaging, fun and collaborative. Gamification entails making any scenario a game based approach and leveraging on the desires and needs of humans to compete and achieve. This idea of compete and achieve essentially builds value for the player/learner and thus engages and motivates the user of the application. The largest area where Gamification can play a strong part is in the realm of learning where users move away from the traditional modes of learning to a more game based approach where they can pit against each other, earn badges, get leader board status et al making learning a fun experience. The learner also uses skills like risk taking, persistence, attention to detail and thinking on their feet. These are behaviours that are traditionally demonstrated by leaders and this sense of winning makes learning enjoyable

Gamification has also gained traction and importance because humans have a competitive streak and whenever a human/learner wins a test or a game there is a release of testosterone and dopamine into the brain of the learner. Any release of these two into the brain over a period of time changes the brain structure, chemical makeup and makes the player/human/learner smarter and can take on more challenges. This is primarily the reason why Gamification is being seen as an important tool in the realm of learning.

Gamification also has a central component of fun and that makes learning easier and less scientific and mundane. Games also improve hand to eye coordination, peer networking, building teams on the go and generating a sense of worth for the players.

Gamification entails



In the context of this article, gamification is a framework that can be used for multiple things in learning. Gamification can help in creation of simulations to test theories and models while learning a new concept. Gamification and games can also be an ice breaker of sorts for trainers to move from topic to topic and also to introduce new concepts. Recent technology boom has made it more complex to learn and understand. Games can help break technology into manageable chunks and also empower learners to use new tech. Analytics while greatly helpful for the organization cannot be really supportive data for the learner while leader boards, badges provide easier milestone checks for learner and establishes the learning path better for the learner. Games and Gamification also greatly helps in delivering content on a particular subject while keeping the learner engaged and games can make even dry topics fun.

Gamification is also being widely adopted because of its inherent features of engagement and collaboration. Games offer a sense of challenge to the player make the activity a time bound exercise, get the player to compete fiercely while also helping the learner to leverage on existing skills as well as skills of the team to navigate the game play and discover new learning. Games also work in the mode of simulation where the player/learner can play the game for an infinite number of rounds till she/he master the game indicating a mastery of the concept being taught as well.

Gamification is gaining traction even in the commercial space. As per statistics on the internet, websites that have gamification built into the navigation get a significant increase in site actions and hence is seeing an increased usage in commenting, sharing of information, and more updates to the social networking activity feeds.

As organizations continue investing in making gamification a part of their learning curriculum they are already seeing benefits and these are some of the reasons of the wide adoption of Gamification:

1. Gamification aids in cognitive development

As detailed above the whole spirit of playing the game and win increases the testosterone and dopamine levels in the brain. This constant influx of chemical changes makes the mind sharper and keener.

2. Engagement increases

Games versus a traditional mode of learning always means learners select games over the traditional modes. Games allow for teaming, competing, collaborating and this makes the learner more engaged with the learning on hand.

3. Borderless world

Traditional forms of learning were classroom focused. But with technology growth and gamification, learners can play from anywhere and a multi-player multi-mode game can be easily created to teach a new concept to a group of people not really collocated together. This makes learning truly a global phenomenon and people compete against anyone from across and not a closed group.

4. Social skills improvement

Gameplay entails learners to harness their prior knowledge, cross map between the various levels and take control of their learning through repeat games. Learners must use logic, survival skills, risk taking abilities to generate new ideas and solutions in order to complete the game. These are much needed social skills and they get strengthened in gamification.

The above points elaborate on the benefits of gamification and why it's being so widely accepted in the field of learning. Gamification is accepted widely but there are barriers as well that need to be considered in the whole approach of gamification for learning. Some of the barriers include:

1. Games can help a learner to understand a concept but a deep dive into a specific concept will lose its complete focus when there is some focus on the game plays as well
2. Games are great when the learning is willing but if a learner is not winning then the need to learn tapers off and learning actually comes down
3. Badges and leaderboard are all excellent tools to highlight good learners but those not understand the concept well will not be getting more focus and will not get the remedial learning they might really need
4. Technology for gamification is growing fast but adoption also has to happen at the same pace

Organizations have come to realize the need for quality learning and are now adopting this idea of games and gamification as part of their training curriculum and organizations are working hard at making games that help learners with new concepts, skills and make learning engaging.

In conclusion, games is proliferating because of its ability to bring together learners, make them collaborate and learn concepts that would otherwise be difficult to comprehend. Gamification has helped training organizations in breaking borders of departments and getting disparate teams to come together for learning. Gamification has helped in engagement, creativity, learner interaction, behaviours like risk taking and group decision making.

