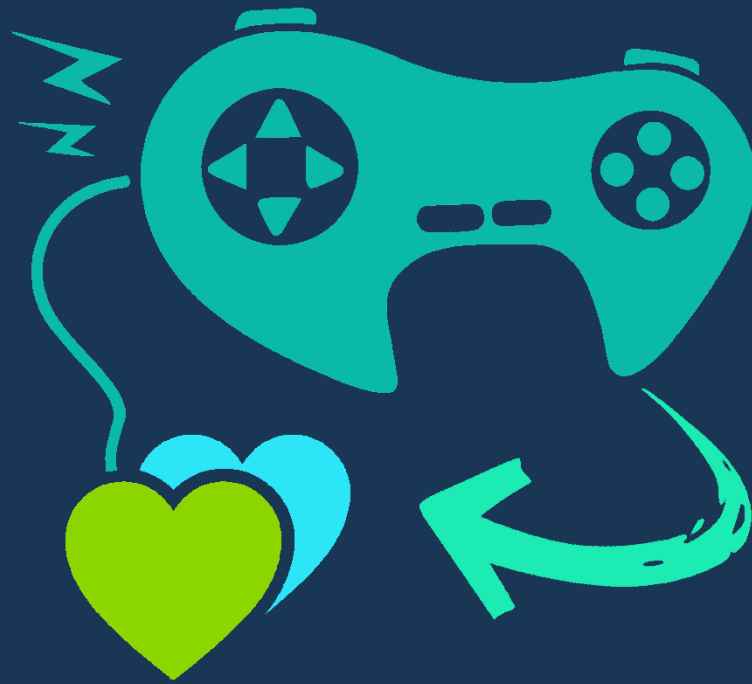


# EFFECTIVE USE OF GAMIFICATION IN A BUSINESS

*Or: How to align gamification to business objectives!*



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# INTRODUCTION

*Setting the scene!*

It's already well accepted and documented that gamification boosts employee and learner engagement, and can transform your training programme from a disaster into a success. The psychology behind how it works has been written about many times – just see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

We've previously [written](#) about how we utilise gamification and social features on our Academy Learning Management System – the [world's #1 LMS](#), as ranked by eLearning expert Craig Weiss – to delight and excite learners.

But, up until now, we haven't explained precisely how these gaming mechanics – badges, leaderboards and so on – can be aligned to your business objectives and used by organisations like yours to boost success and return on investment.

That's what this white paper is for – it'll show you how gamification features can be aligned to strategic business learning goals to help you get the most out of your employees and create a company culture of empowerment and engagement that you can really be proud of.

## HOW TO EFFECTIVELY USE GAMIFICATION!

- Engagement: why gamification is important
- Rules of play
- Games and gamers: Marczewski's User Types
- Yukai Chou's Octalysis Framework
- Business Objectives of Gamification
- The user journey
- Launching your gamification strategy
- Case study: GAME Retail

*What a line-up!*



## ENGAGEMENT: WHY GAMIFICATION IS IMPORTANT

Research by [Gallup](#) found that just 13% of employees are engaged. Take a moment to let that sink in: thirteen percent of employees are engaged.

That means the vast majority of employees aren't engaged. In fact, a worrying 63% of employees are classed as 'not engaged', and an even more concerning 24% are 'actively disengaged' – these are people who will write hate mail, bring down the morale of everyone around them, gossip, spread bad thoughts and coast through their workdays doing the bare minimum just to keep under their manager's radar.

One of the reasons that gamification helps to engage these workers and rouse them from their slumber is that we're all used to playing games. Games are a natural part of our lives, from playing peekaboo as babies to Monopoly and Call of Duty as adults. We just have to mention the names 'Angry Birds' and 'Farmville' and you'll see the prevalence of game-playing among working adults.



And contrary to the popular belief that gamers are generally teenagers holed up in their bedrooms, tapping away on their computers or pressing buttons on their controllers until the wee small hours, only 18% of gamers are aged 18 or under. The majority (53%) of gamers are aged between 18 and 49 years old, with a fair proportion (29%) aged 50 and over. In fact, research from [Gamification Nation](#) found that 70% of senior executives even play games *during work hours*.



This all shows that what started as a childhood love of games doesn't disappear over time or once we 'grow up' – games will always be enjoyable, engaging and relatable, no matter our age.

Clearly, since we enjoy playing games throughout our lives and understand the mechanics and metaphors behind games, it makes sense to strategically bring them into our working lives and take advantage of our natural desires for competition and success.

And this applies to all aspects of our work: from internal communications and target setting to climbing the ladder and improving knowledge.

Indeed, research from [Talent LMS](#) showed that 72% of employees undertaking training online 'strongly prefer gamification' on their Learning Management Systems. They also found that learners are going gaga over getting points for activities like reading, writing, sharing course reviews and voting for content.

It seems obvious that gamification is the answer to our Learning and Development prayers.

## RULES OF PLAY

Applying gamification to learning is like playing any game: you need to create a set of rules that you will stick to. As [An Coppens](#) of [Gamification Nation](#) explains: “You need to create a distinct environment with set rules, boundaries and conditions that people have to abide by. Gamification needs to be legal, above board and ethical – rules are there to limit what people can do and also to keep your game stable.”

A good game in learning will be ‘winnable’ for all who join in, and not dependent on any external influences or luck. For instance, employees who consistently perform well will enjoy being able to progress to the top of a leaderboard, and the rules for how to get there are obvious and clear to all. Theoretically, everyone who is willing to put in the time, effort and training to get to the top can do so. This makes gamification inclusive as well as effective.



## GAMES AND GAMERS

But don't forget that not all aspects of gamification will appeal to all kinds of people. Think of your family playing a game of Monopoly – some will like the strategy of buying up all the properties in one corner of the board, while others will delight in turning the cheapest properties into death-traps to destroy the other players. Still others will live for the thrill of unexpected Community Chest and Chance cards. For some, it's in the playing, not the winning – others are all about the end goal.

What this means is that all game players are different – a point explained by Andrzej Marczewski of Gamified UK. His '[User Types](#)' theory explains that there are generally six kinds of people: Socialisers, Free Spirits, Achievers, Philanthropists, Disruptors and Players. Head to [Andrzej's blog](#) to read about these user types in more detail, but here's a quick summary for our purposes:

### MARCZEWSKI'S USER TYPES

- **Socialisers** are motivated by **Relatedness**. They want to interact with others and create social connections.
- **Free Spirits** are motivated by **Autonomy**. They want to create and explore.
- **Achievers** are motivated by **Mastery**. They are looking to learn new things and improve themselves. They want challenges to overcome.
- **Philanthropists** are motivated by **Purpose** and **Meaning**. This group are altruistic, wanting to give to other people and enrich the lives of others in some way with no expectation of reward.
- **Players** are motivated by **Rewards**. They will do what is needed of them to collect rewards from a system. They are in it for themselves.
- **Disruptors** are motivated by **Change**. In general they want to disrupt your system, either directly or through other users to force positive or negative change.

*Andrzej Marczewski's User Types, Gamified UK*

As you can see from Marczewski's 6 User Types, different aspects of online learning and gamification will appeal to and motivate different kinds of people. Let's look at each in turn and see how gamification in online learning can appeal to each type:

## SOCIALISERS

These users enjoy interacting with others and relating to them on any level. Therefore, gamification which encourages social interactions will be valuable to these users. Learners who fall into this category will enjoy joining specific topic groups (we call them 'Insight Groups'), chat functionality, sharing information on a Facebook-style Dialogue Stream and interacting with what other people post.

Since learning from others is an essential part of knowledge acquisition (the '70:20:10' problem explains that 20% of knowledge is gained through observation of others), these learners are set to make great strides in their self-development. Tap into the motivation of these learners and drive intellectual capital by encouraging group activities, sharing of knowledge and emphasising the importance of social learning.



## FREE SPIRITS

These are the learners who will spend a lot of time exploring their Learning Management System. They'll discover the cool extra functionality before anyone else, and they'll take pride in knowing they got there first. They're also interested in creating and forging their own way, so the ability to create their own chat threads and topics will appeal. Gamification which rewards learners for exploring their LMS will motivate these learners further.

## ACHIEVERS

If you've ever worked in a sales environment, you'll know that salespeople are natural achievers. They're motivated by the sense of competition – points and leaderboards will get these learners motivated to learn. They'll go the extra mile (say, download an document or go back over a module to get 100% on a test) to ensure that they'll hit their self-imposed targets and reach the top of the leaderboard, beating their colleagues.

## PLAYERS

In a similar way to achievers, players are motivated by rewards – but not because they want to win. They simply find it motivating to gain the rewards, whether or not they are ultimately linked to any further achievement. For these learners, it's important to clearly demonstrate how they can achieve the rewards – in this case, badges and points for undertaking eLearning and exploring their LMS. For instance, if they know that they'll have to log into their LMS before 7am in order to achieve the 'Early Bird' badge, they'll be motivated to do so.



## PHILANTHROPISTS

Like socialisers, philanthropists are social creatures, and in terms of learning they will be motivated by the desire to help others on their own learning journeys. Rather than share their knowledge for social reasons, they will do so to help others to improve and grow. Again, Insight Groups, chat and 'Ask an expert' functionality will be popular with this group. They'll want to be seen as an expert in their topic of interest – the person who is contributing most to the success of others – so 'top contributor' leaderboards within groups will be motivating for these learners.



## DISRUPTORS

There's always one... Some people just aren't happy with how things are right now. That can be both a good and a bad thing – good if they want to instigate changes for the better, but very bad if they are against the whole idea of an LMS or online learning. It's important to give these learners a voice: if you allow them to rank and rate content, report bugs and offer suggestions, they'll be more receptive to the idea of learning on the system. Assigning badges for submitting support tickets and recommending content will keep them doing these things. And, of course, any issues will be picked up and fixed promptly – a double whammy!

Marczewski's User Types highlights the importance of utilising all kinds of gamification in your business strategy – badges that will appeal to some learners, progression levels to appeal to others, and leaderboards that will motivate the rest.



## CHOU'S OCTALYSIS FRAMEWORK

User Types isn't the only theory around. In his Octalysis Framework, Yu-kai Chou explains that there are 8 core drives of games that will dictate who they appeal to and whether they are successful in accomplishing behavioural change:

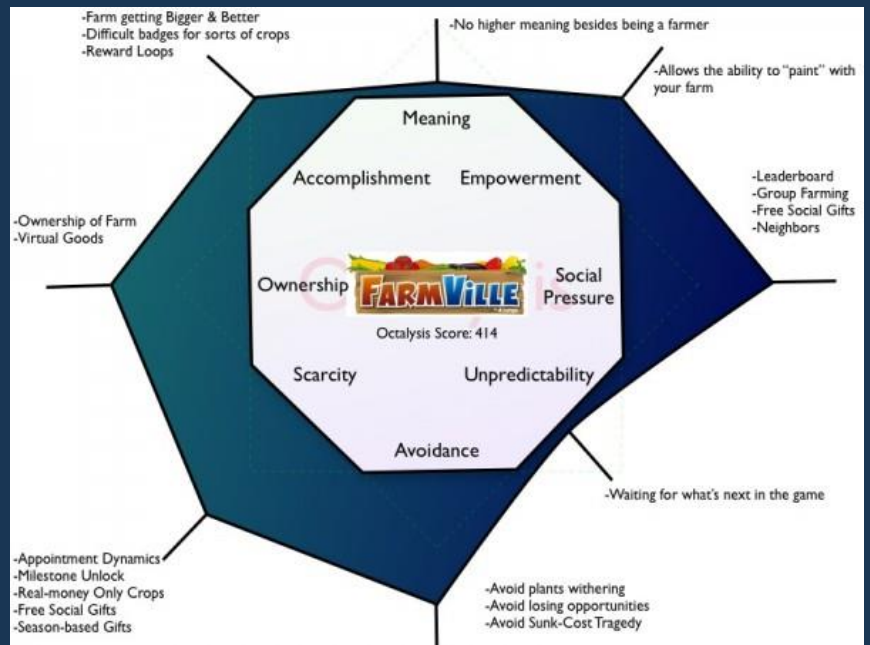
**YU-KAI CHOU'S  
OCTALYSIS**

1. Epic meaning and calling
2. Development and accomplishment
3. Empowerment of creativity and feedback
4. Ownership and possession
5. Social influences and relatedness
6. Scarcity and impatience
7. Unpredictability and curiosity
8. Loss and avoidance

To the right you'll see an example of Chou's Octalysis Framework (all credit to [Yu-kai Chou](#)). In this case, Farmville has been scored on each of these eight factors.

Some learners will be motivated by games which are, for example, high in accomplishment but low in unpredictability – they'll like gamification of achievements and enjoy knowing what they need to do in order to gain each badge on their LMS, for instance. In order to understand it fully, [read this article](#).

As with User Types, Octalysis highlights the importance of getting the gamification right. It is not enough to add points, badges and leaderboards to Learning Management Systems – if they are not aligned to business objectives and appropriately target different styles of gamers and learners, the training will fall flat.



## BUSINESS OBJECTIVES OF GAMIFICATION

So, now we've seen how gamification in learning appeals to various kinds of people – from those who find socialising important to those who want to help others to flourish – let's see how you can gamify your online training plan to achieve business objectives.

Firstly, there are a few areas in which gamification can be used within an organisation:

- attraction
- retention
- motivation
- engagement
- productivity

Using gamification within Learning and Development covers a few of these areas, from the more obvious (motivation, engagement and productivity) to less obvious. Gamification in learning helps retention because engaging learners enables them to develop in their careers, opening up more options within the organisation and showing them that the business cares about them enough to offer some really rather fantastic training. This is incredibly important to retain employees.

Here is how each gamification feature can tie into business objectives:

**Levels** are perhaps the most obviously useful way to align gamification with the business, as they allow you to tailor each learner's journey to a set of parameters necessary for success.

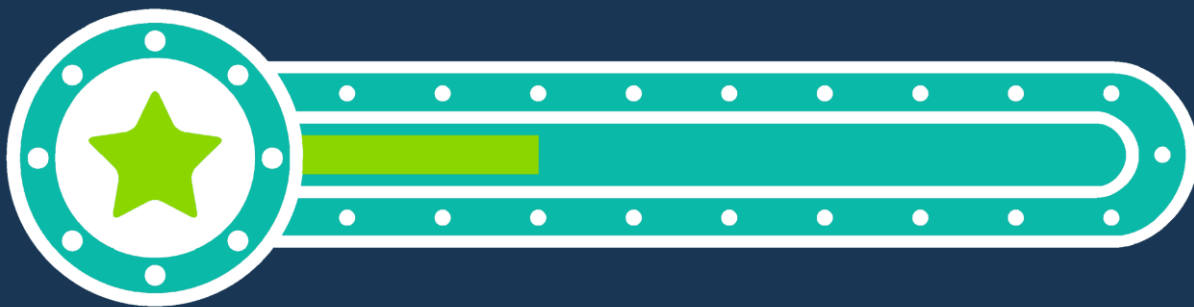


When learners first log on to their LMS, their journey is about discovery. They look around their LMS, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, and try to figure out what's what. Using levels in onboarding shows them how to use their new learning platform, what they need to do and what's in store for them; the scaffolding builds their skills up to the height required for them to 'pass' that journey, and then it is over.

But, importantly, the 'end game' doesn't mean their entire learning journey has come to an end. Instead, each time they hit the finish line, they discover they are able to push on further in a new race towards a different end point. Say, they finish their first journey of 'Induction' and then unlock the 'Trainee' level. Once they pass this, they're on to the 'Sales Newbie' level, and so on.

Each organisation can set its own levels – as many or as few as necessary – and set how many points are required to 'level up' and move on to the next level.

At each level, learners are given access to certain learning materials, eLearning modules, groups, downloadables and further reading. They cannot unlock the next set of materials until they have satisfied the criteria at the current level and gained sufficient points to level up.



Levels are superb tools for ensuring employees are sufficiently knowledgeable to lead a team, gain a promotion or move into a new department.

The number of **Points** required at each level is indicative of the difficulty of that level and the amount of work that needs to be put in. As the learner works their way through their required learning content they gain points. The organisation should alter the number of points available for each piece of content, so that larger pieces of eLearning are worth more points and are seen as valuable and essential. 'Extra' reading can be given fewer points, highlighting that the content is not mandatory, or assigned **badges** which give the learner a reward, but which don't necessarily progress them through their level.



Badges can be gained for taking eLearning modules, downloading materials, ranking and rating content and interacting with the LMS by sharing links, chatting with others and posting progress to social media. As badges accrue, the learner will move up the LMS **leaderboard**, which shows the company who is doing well.

The leaderboard can, if desired by the organisation, be linked to real-life remuneration and rewards – gift certificates, bonuses and days off, for instance. This motivates your learners by emphasising the reality of the training: they're doing this because it will improve their job performance, and consequently their professional lives. This isn't meaningless training that they're being forced to do; it's important, potentially life changing learning that will improve their job prospects and their lives.





**Top contributors leaderboards** within Insight Groups work well in organisations which value the power of social learning, coaching and mentoring, and increasing intellectual capital. Monitoring the people that contribute most to discussions around certain topics can also highlight those ready to move into leadership roles and those who can go on to become LMS advocates within the organisation and motivate their peers to undertake training.



## LAUNCH

When rolling out your gamified training strategy, think of it like launching a game. Typically, a game will go through a number of testing steps, from its bare bones stage to alpha and beta testing. Gamification in a Learning and Development strategy can be tested in a similar way, and it lets you assess how gamification will be received in your organisation and whether it has been correctly aligned to business objectives.

**Initial tests:** once you've planned how you'll utilise gamification in your training plan, you need to try it out to make sure the journey works, the badges and points are achievable, and that the gaming mechanics are reinforcing the correct behaviours.

**Pilot test:** after sense-checking the gamification, it's time to roll out the online learning to a larger group of employees. They'll be able to tell you if there are any bugs, dead-ends, annoyances (is it patronising? Oversimplified? Too difficult?) and give you other valuable feedback. This will be helpful to you in seeing how well your plan might work and if it's ready to be launched. If everything works well, you can move on to the next step. If not, it's back to the drawing board!

**Launch that bad boy!:** When you're confident the gamification functionality works and is aligned to the correct objectives, it's time to launch it. You'll want to make sure there is sufficient marketing around the launch (you want your employees to be excited and eager to give it a go) and explain what's in it for the learner. When they can see what they'll get out of it, they'll be more engaged with the entire process.

**Tweaks and changes:** Keep a close eye on your L&D programme to make sure that you're seeing the results you expected. If levels aren't aligned to progression adequately, or badges are too easy to get (thus doing away with the feeling of achievement), you'll need to tweak the programme. Keep referring back to your business objectives to monitor how well the gamification is aligned.



## CASE STUDY: GAME RETAIL

We spoke with Craig Mills, Training and eLearning Coordinator at Game Retail, about how they took all this to heart and created an exceptional Academy, **Game Learning Zone**:

“Creating a Learning Management System can be fairly daunting,” Craig said. “You ask someone about their experience with eLearning and the usual response is that of disinterest as they recall hours of tapping through pages of content.”

One of Game’s core values is ‘Fun’, so it was essential that their LMS would embody this. If it didn’t, it wouldn’t fit in with the company culture. Such a disconnect between values and training would result in a confused, disengaged workforce – so making sure their online learning programme was fun and enjoyable was paramount to Craig.

“Fun’ was the driving value behind its conception and creation and that was ultimately what led to our decision to team up with Growth Engineering to bring the vision to reality. Gamification was the perfect complement to our business strategy and by using simple gaming mechanics like levels and rewarding progress with badges we will communicate with our staff in a language they are already familiar with and well versed in.”

As for the mechanics of it, Craig will be using gamification “in a variety of ways to engage and excite all staff around the business. All departments have been challenged to take ownership of the learning they provide with a set of badges that are personalised to them.”

It’s great to hear that Game Retail recognises that it’s important that not only are the learners engaged with the learning, but the management teams who are rolling it out to their departments are motivated and enthusiastic, too. Without the support of management, training programmes are much more likely to fail.

Particularly for Academies which contain a lot of content, like Game Learning Zone, dividing the LMS with badge sets relevant to different departments is a fantastic way to engage learners throughout the organisation – they’ll want to complete their set of badges, after all...

“Badge sets excite the learners ... badges really resonate with our learners and having a collection is something that anyone can relate to and enjoy – I’m sure we’ve all collected something at some point!

“Assigning badge sets to different departmental functions fuels their progress and interaction and can make them complete courses they wouldn’t usually complete just because they want the set.”

When it comes to aligning the gamification to the learning journey, Craig explains that levels allow Game to define structure and course flow, with each progression unlocking more course content.

# GAME



“The learner journey is enhanced by naming the levels in a way they can relate to, giving them a sense of hierarchy and succession, and this is echoed in the use of leaderboards and rankings.”

And as for the future?

“We are looking at new ways every day that we can harness the power of our Academy LMS and make it continually exciting and engaging for our employees. Gamification really gives us the freedom and creativity to achieve this.”

Thanks for sharing your strategy for aligning gamification with business objectives, Craig! We’re confident Game Learning Zone will be a resounding success!



*That’s it from us – for now, anyway. Thanks for reading!*

As you may have guessed, we're right chatterboxes here at Growth Engineering. If you'd like us contact you by phone, Skype or email, [fill out this form \(click here!\)](#) and we'll jump right to it!

Alternatively, pick one of the topics below to continue your own learning journey.

- [1. The Secret of Engagement](#)
- [2. The Business Case for Gamification](#)
- [3. Take a Tour of the Academy LMS!](#)
- [4. Is Your LMS Delivering Return on Investment?](#)

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