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Engagement Games: Gamification in Your Community

TOP THREE TAKEAWAYS

Jillian shared her extensive gamification experience with members.

1. **Gamification definition.** Looking for a baseline definition of gamification? Jillian shared Google's definition to provide context.

2. **Level-up.** Interested in learning Jillian's 5 levels of gamification so that you can "level-up" your game? Read on.

3. **Successful game development.** Wondering how to develop a game in which everyone feels that they can participate? Members discussed this at length with 2 useful outcomes. Learn the 3 elements of successful game development.

OVERVIEW

1. **Background – Jillian:** Jillian has been the Community Architect at TheCR for the last 5 years. She helps with various advisory clients, training and research. People understand the basics of gamification, but not necessarily the foundational elements of it. This call focused on the

OVERVIEW

1. **Background – Jillian**

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2. **Games have a straightforward concept.**

   They are simply a way to escape reality.

   a. Jillian has a favorite quote on this subject from Jane McGonigal, PhD, *Reality is Broken*. Her specialty is how games make us better. *"Compared to games, reality is too easy. Games challenge us with voluntary obstacles and help us put our personal strengths to use."*

   b. When something is too difficult in a game, we don't get upset or quit. We just figure out how to do it, much more so than in real life. Since it's a game, we voluntarily challenge ourselves.

   c. Games teach us how to think and how to manipulate our real-world environments, which is good because that helps us to develop skills that we might not otherwise develop.

3. **Gamification definition.**

   According to Google, gamification is defined as: *"An application of typical elements of game playing (e.g., point scoring, competition with others, rules of play) to other areas of activity, typically as an online marketing technique to encourage engagement with a product or service."*

BEST PRACTICES

1. **Level 1 – Understand what Makes a Good Game:** There are 4 elements to a good game: achievable goals, clear and fair rules, a feedback system and voluntary participation.

2. **Level 2 – Recognize What Engagement Looks Like with Gamification:** Gamification makes everyday tasks and behaviors more engaging. There are 2 main engagement tactics: to drive behavior and provide feedback.

3. **Level 3 – Determine the Gamification Value in Communities:** There are 3 main values: to close the engagement gap, to offer choices while fostering positive habits and to provide users with a social outlet.

    a. To emphasize the importance of the social outlet that community provides, Jillian shared an example. She ran an advocacy program for a large engineering community. Even though they were super users and advocates within the community (and provided 95% of the community's content), they were socially awkward in person. The community was their opportunity to shine socially.

4. **Level 4 – Understand What's Behind Successful Game Development:** The game needs to be fun and achievable.

5.
    a. *What does the Community Need to Provide?* The community needs to provide 3 elements:

        i. *Dynamics:* This consists of the constraints (the action to perform), a narrative (to tell them how they are doing) and progression (this is how they move forward).

        ii. *Mechanics:* The mechanics consists of the challenges (objective of the game and what is rewarded for achieving the objective), the feedback (the communication tool, i.e. leader boards) and the rewards (recognition, money, swag). Don't underestimate the value of recognition.

        iii. *Components:* This consists of the actual achievements. It shows recognition and appreciation in the form of levels reached, points, badges or whatever works for your community. Leader boards are also very motivating. People need to see how they compare to their peers. Without it, they don't know whether they need to work harder.

BEST PRACTICES, CONT.

5. **Level 5 – Learn How to Design a Community Game:** CR members will be familiar with these principles:

   a. *Define your Business Objectives:* Ask yourself why you are doing this and what success will look like once it's achieved. For example, providing support in a timely manner, being faster than the customer support phone line, providing answers to 5000 people a month, etc.

   b. *Determine Target Behaviors:* Identify the key behaviors in your community, such as ask, share, search, etc. These are the behaviors you want to foster for community and then measure it. For instance, if the key behavior is to have people answer, answering questions will earn the member points.

   c. *Measure the Behavior:* Ensure that you can measure the behavior and enter it into your gamification system.

   d. *Think Like a Community Player:* Jillian stresses this point for all aspects of community, not just gamification. Don't think about this from a business perspective or how you want people to behave. Look at it through the lens of your community. Look at the personas that exist and what motivates them.

      i. Jillian stated that she knows of a top user in a client community who answers questions in the community in order to stay on top of his field and not forget how to do things. Additionally, he enjoys receiving thanks from those that he helps.

   e. *Develop Activity Loops:* There are 2 activity loops.

      i. *Engagement Loop:* This is your motivation and your action and your feedback.

      ii. *Progression Loop:* Progression loops are how players get from start to finish.

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LESSONS LEARNED

- Don't try to trick members with sneaky gamification ploys as it could pose a significant risk to the success of the program. Communicate the rules in clear terms that outline exactly what is being asked of the participant. Be specific so that people can align their expectations.

- Jillian shared an example of a member – a super user – in one of her client communities who set up a separate account in order to give kudos to all of his answers. The lesson here is to think about how people cheat.

- The risk of not doing gamification is missed opportunity. Gamification is an extra way to make sure that people gravitate towards desired behaviors.

- Hillary wondered how to design a game that allows everyone to feel that they can participate. For instance, if they see that they are too far behind everyone else, they won't want to participate because there is no hope of winning. Members discussed this at length yielding 2 outcomes: the member has achieved something that they personally value (recognition or a personal best) and the member embodies what the community team wants from its members.

- The Monopoly game at McDonald's is a good example of a narrative. The narrative is strong because the player is familiar with Monopoly. Community is the same way. What is your super user's story? How did they get involved in community? What made them stay? What do they like about it? That's their narrative.

- Gamification won't work in all communities. It is not well received in the medical community, for instance. Furthermore, some cultures around the world are not open to gamification. For example, the Asia Pacific region consumes more than they engage. The lesson learned here is to perhaps have a two-track gamification system in global communities, one that rewards for consuming information and one that rewards for participation.

- Keep in mind the following elements for successful game development: 1) people want to be able to win – it must be achievable; 2) they want to solve problems; 3) they want to collaborate and explore, be recognized for their achievements and they love surprises.