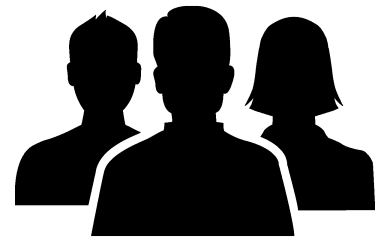# Giving the Golden Ticket: Getting Creative With Gamification

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Wondering how to rollout a new contest?** Monique shared her practical 3-step plan.

- **Want a powerful way to endorse your contest?** This may not be easy, but if you can get endorsement from this group or person, it will add an insane amount of credibility to your efforts.

- **Interested in Monique's advice for kicking off your first contest?** Five key suggestions were given. Monique also offered her 3 key recommendations to jumpstart a contest in communities that have fallen out of favor with gamification.

SPEAKERS

Monique van den Berg (Atlassian) and Kelly Schott (TheCR)

COMPETENCIES

Community Management

MATURITY PHASES

CMM1, CMM2, CMM3, CMM4

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OVERVIEW

- **Background Monique van den Berg.** Monique is the Senior Manager of Operations for Atlassian. Atlassian's community consists of both in-person and online community programming. Monique manages the online portion.

  - Their gamification platform is out-of-the-box from Khoros/Lithium. It is very basic, meaning that she has had to be very vocal about how to use the gamification in a way that will scale.

  - Atlassian has a "Golden Ticket Program," which is based on Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory fame. It focuses on activating their internal employees to become more engaged in the community. It has been in place for 3 years.

    - Over a certain period of time, employees are asked to become more active on community and earn points for various activities that promote desired behaviors. The top 10 point earners get a candy bar. In one of those candy bars is a golden ticket. The golden ticket earns him/her a ticket to enjoy a VIP experience at the Company's annual Summit.

- **Impact of the contest**. Monique showed a chart that outlined the percentage of questions first answered by role in the community. It included community support staff and Atlassian staff. It was clear that the contest spiked engagement among Atlassian staff, which even created a lasting bump in participation – about 1.5% - after the contest.

BEST PRACTICES

- **Consider the following as a roll out for your program.** Monique listed the 3 steps for rolling out their Golden Ticket Program:
    - *Dates.* Establish the dates for the contest duration. Monique also includes the date of their Summit, as that is pertinent information to know as the grand prize.
    - *Points.* Outline which engagement practices earn points and the point value for each action. Monique stresses that it's not just about product expertise; anyone can participate, not just product experts or engineers. The community started as a Q&A site, but there are also great conversations, off-topic groups, localized groups, etc. It extends beyond Q&A to be an actual community. The contest helps to enforce that for staff who still think of it as just a Q&A site.
        - Liking a post or comment – 1 point
        - Receiving a like or an up vote– 2 points
        - Posting a comment/reply and/or posting in a group – 3 points
        - Posting an answer or starting a discussion – 4 points
        - Providing an accepted answer/joining a group – 5 points
        - Writing an article – 10 points
            - Monique posts a leader board every week, but the top 10 are posted in alphabetical order. The next top 10 individuals are also posted alphabetically. Contestants don't know their actual ranking, which Monique found to be more motivating and kept people from resting on their laurels.

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BEST PRACTICES

- *Win.* Outline and explain the prize.
  - The Golden Ticket at Atlassian has a message right on the ticket that basically says that they connected with users online, now they get to connect with them in person.
  - Monique had the Golden Ticket created on Etsy.
  - Winners receive:
    - A front-row ticket to the Keynote Presentation
    - Their own private networking reception the first day
    - An invitation to an executive dinner in which community awards are presented. This dinner includes the Company Founders
    - Access to a private VIP room and bar for a concert
    - The ability to connect with other users in person

- **Add credibility to your contest by having your CEO kick it off.** This is a very positive move and shows executive support. Any leader at the executive level could do the same. At Atlassian, the CEO also hands out the prize at the end of the contest.

ATLASSIAN COMMUNITY'S
GOLDEN TICKET
GREETINGS TO YOU, THE LUCKY FINDER OF THIS
GOLDEN TICKET *FROM THE ATLASSIAN COMMUNITY!...*
BECAUSE YOU DID SUCH A GREAT JOB CONNECTING WITH
OUR USERS ONLINE, YOU GET TO MEET THEM IN PERSON
.. EVEN BETTER THAN A LIFETIME SUPPLY OF CHOCOLATE!
*In your wildest dreams you could not imagine the marvelous SURPRISES
that await in* LAS VEGAS!

LESSONS LEARNED

- Participants have left very positive comments for Monique after the contest. What resonated with her the most is that people now understand that the community is far more than just Q&A.
  - People also talked about their professional growth as a result of the contest. For some, it helped them to learn about different Company products outside of their product team.
  - The users in the community don't know when the contest is happening. Some user comments express their appreciation for seeing an increased and meaningful presence of Atlassian members.

- By the third year of the contest, Monique did notice an increase in people trying to circumvent the system, particularly people trying to rack up points by doing some of the lower-level activities. For the latest contest, as an example, Monique capped the number of points that can be earned for simply liking a post. She capped the number at 500. Fortunately, too, having a top 10 number allows Monique to look at the activity level of each of the participants to ensure that they are providing meaningful activity. The lesson learned here is to be aware that people will invariably try to rig the contest.

LESSONS LEARNED

- It's anecdotal, but Monique believes that the contest has helped get the community on the map with the communications department and the rest of the Company. Prior to the contest, when communications wanted to communicate something it used many channels, but community wasn't one of them. Now, it's very rare to see communication that isn't also posted to the community. Community is becoming more embedded into the DNA of the Company.

- When it comes to contest motivators, Monique admitted that the Summit prize won't motivate everyone. There are some people who won't try to enter because the prize isn't something that interests them. Monique tries to post pictures of the contest winners with the executive staff and the Company Founders. This helped to increase participation year-over-year when people began understanding the benefits. Face time with executives is a real motivator.
    - Other perks that they are investigating and/or have used are personalized avatars, designing a logo for groups, certificates or plaques that can be displayed and shared within their social networks, trophies, commemorative badges on their profiles, etc.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Even with promotion on all Company channels, people still did miss knowing about the contest. Monique advocates over-promoting to ensure that everyone gets a chance. Their primary source of promotion is an internal blog post that can be shared to the entire Company.

    - The global town hall is a weekly meeting for the whole Company. An announcement is made at that meeting. For instance, the CEO dressed as an Oompa Loompa to kick off the contest, which was a big hit.

    - Monique reminds people who participated in prior contests that it is happening again.

    - They try to hype up the contest through informal channels.

    - As the bottom line, try as many ways as possible to get the message out there. If it is a very large company, Monique suggested trying the contest with one department as a pilot and going from there.

- Kelly wanted to highlight the fact that the contest engagement improved each year. Sometimes you have to give something a chance. Monique would say that the contest was successful in the first year, but it grew to become very successful each additional time it happened.

    - Keep in mind that you will learn after the first contest and tweak it for each subsequent time. They tweaked the points each time and, as mentioned, capped the amount of points allowed for the more simple engagement activities.

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LESSONS LEARNED

- Monique said that a lesson learned was to ensure that the design packaging isn't misleading. In the first year, someone thought that because of the design of the candy bar wrapping, he thought that he had won. He didn't realize that the ticket was inside the wrapping and became very upset. The design was fixed for the following contest and communication made very clear that the ticket was *inside* the candy bar.

- Last year, the top person had twice as many points as the rest of the top 10 participants combined. The second person had as many points as the rest of the contestants. This highlights the effectiveness of not publishing the points because in this case, it would have been demotivating.

- Ensure that the points earned won't favor one group over another, i.e. product specialists or engineers who will be able to naturally earn more points. Give thought to ensure that the contest is as fair as possible for all who want to participate. Choose to reward a wide array of desired behaviors.
  - This year's winner was a marketer. She won without any product expertise. Monique will be sure to emphasize this in next year's contest so that people feel assured that truly anyone can win.

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LESSONS LEARNED

- This year, the Summit was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The winner of the contest will be given the opportunity to attend in 2021. However, Monique wants to ensure that the winner is celebrated this year with a blog post and some fanfare so that her accomplishments don't feel anti-climatic due to circumstances beyond anyone's control.

- Monique's advice for people creating an inaugural contest for either internal or external contestants is to keep in mind that not everyone loves contests. Don't take it personally; it doesn't constitute failure. For these people, make sure that they can turn off notifications on profiles for badges, etc. so that it doesn't cause annoyance.
    - Try not to do everything at once. Start with a program and iterate on it. See what works and what doesn't work for your audience as you go. Keep in mind that everyone is unique.
    - Don't be afraid to do crazy things because sometimes they work.
    - Keep in mind that one of the principles of gamification is to keep it fresh. Therefore, Monique tries to release a new badge each month for people to earn. Some die-hards collect everything and others who are new will have lots to choose from. If the die-hards don't have something to collect each month, they will get bored.
    - Space things out over time and have fun with it!

LESSONS LEARNED

- Unfortunately, a lot of the scoring for this contest is manual. The analytics team helped to put together a dashboard for it, but mostly Monique pulls manual data from the backend of Khoros. For the standard gamification, the platform is built on the out-of-the-box Khoros. However, it is very, very basic. Monique is currently trying to work on a proof-of-concept with Bunchball. Monique has worked with this in the past and it is much more flexible. It allows data to be pulled in from multiple sources. Ideally, your gamification system should be a holistic system that pulls data from all applicable areas.

- For communities that have fallen out of favor for gamification for whatever reason, Monique was asked what she would recommend to stimulate interest again. In this case, Monique would try a monthly contest that comes with a badge. A lot of times, it comes down to consistency and repetition. It took a little while to get people interested at Atlassian, too, but people eventually started looking forward to the monthly badges offered at the beginning of each month. Be consistent and wait for the members to come to you with their response. Until it happens consistently, they won't know if it is worth investing their time.
    - Also consider pairing the badge with a gift card for the number one participator. In essence, that person gets recognition, a badge and a gift card.
    - Stick with what you see that works and continue to build from there.
        - Monique quoted Sam Creek who described trying to do something new in community as going to the edge of cliff and yelling out. You hear nothing, but you go back and do it again and again. One day, you'll hear something.
        - Monique likened this to when she started her Friday Fun Thread. She promoted it every Friday for quite a while and it wasn't always successful. Now she has people signed up through to April 2021.
        - It is very difficult to steam through those lull periods and/or lack of engagement. Don't give up.

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RESOURCES

- Kelly asked participants to share their experiences with gamification:
  - One participant has been working with gamification since 2013. She is responsible for the gamification and reputation aspects of the community.
  - Another participant recently facilitated a merger of 2 communities, which is when gamification was turned on (approximately 8 months ago).
  - As shared by another participant, she would like to explore the native abilities of various platforms to manage gamification. She would like to also learn different ways to run a program so that it is sustainable and scalable.
  - Lastly, yet another participant is planning to launch Yammer firm-wide in the US. She was on the call to learn if there is any type of gamification that can be run on Yammer.

- As mentioned in the discussion: Gamification Resource Bundle: https://network.communityroundtable.com/browse/resource-bundles/gamification
- As mentioned in the discussion: https://www.bunchball.com/

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