

BRINGING THE FUN BACK TO HR!

There is a great deal of buzz around gamification right now. In fact, an entire day was spent on this topic at HR Magazine's very own conference earlier this year. Missed it? You lose 10 points!

The idea of creating a game to get something done is by no means a new notion. Anyone who has had any contact with children will have their own experiences of gamifying household tasks to make them more palatable. Marieke van Raai, Director, Knolskape shared, "Personal favourites of mine are going through the car wash (having a shower and actually using soap), marching like soldiers (getting to the school bus on time) and using our ninja powers to find mummy's keys—you get the idea."

This is common, not just at home but also in the field of education. Children's educators often use play to create engaging and immersive experiences in which children absorb and learn huge amounts of information, all under the guise of fun. Imagine that, having so much fun you don't even realise you are learning.

And at some point this all grinds to a halt. At some point we became accustomed to rote learning, sitting through boring classes, trawling through enormous piles of literature, regurgitating facts and figures—I don't know about you, but corporate compliance training to me is the absolute epitome of how fun left

town. So, where did all the fun go? Maybe the same place as the information—according to Ebbinghaus's Forgetting Curve, only 21% of what is learnt is retained after the completion of a training program. So it's not only the case of the fun leaving town; so did the facts.

Kid-style fun, adult-style content

Well, good news, fun is back. Not only in schools, where education is being revamped to fully engage and immerse students, providing them with critical thinking skills and problem solving capabilities, but also in the workplace where we are currently seeing the rise of gamification.

The phrase became wide spread in 2010, referring to the use of game elements and game design techniques in non-game contexts. In other words, using things such as badges, points and leaderboards to entice people to play a game, whilst achieving some form of organisational goal.

It is that last part that is key, and forms the distinction between 'gaming' and 'gamification'; in order for there to be real

gamification, there must be a bigger purpose than the game itself.

Let your mind roam free on this one, as the possibilities are enormous. Gamification for recruitment? Why not? Gamification for learning and development? Absolutely. Gamification for engaging with your employees? Bingo.

Take for example a company that wants to reduce its onboarding timeframes, with a view to getting new recruits up to speed and productive more efficiently. In this scenario, virtual reality pre-onboarding tools, where new hires can familiarise themselves with their new environment and 'meet' key stakeholders even before they set foot in the door, are highly effective.

Knolskape achieves this by providing such an experience though a 'planetary journey', which is embedded with learning materials, videos, games, PPTs, audio files and quizzes. New hires journey through planets, competing with their cohort, winning points and badges, and unearthing new levels as the adventure progresses.

Engagement equals learning

Another quiz question: What do you think you are more likely to remember? Something shown to you or something you had to work at to uncover? Yup, you got it, discovering it yourself makes it that much more memorable.

Let's look at this with a simple example from an onboarding scenario. A typical aspect of onboarding is to understand the organisational structure and key stakeholders. This information is too often presented in the form of a PPT chart, usually accompanied by a seriously boring presentation.

How about asking the new hire to work out for themselves who is who? Give them a 'mission' to assign pictures of leaders to the right positions on the organisational chart by asking the right questions to unearth clues. What did this person study? Are they good at numbers? Are they creative? The fewer questions you ask the higher your score, and guess what, you are competing with your cohort of other new hires, therefore generating competition and introducing aspects of socialisation.

Take a moment to think about your own onboarding materials. Without a doubt, there is at least one topic which is currently being spoon fed to your new hires that with a bit of creativity and imagination could be gamified and made more interesting. Your solution doesn't have to be high-tech, but it needs to be absorbing. Remember, when it's interesting and fun, it is a lot more likely to be remembered.

Stimulation by simulation

Simulations are another gamification tool that can be added to your L&D kit. Pilots will log thousands of hours on a simulator before they are trusted to fly a plane. A doctor will perform countless surgeries on cadavers before cutting into a live body. But managers? Well, it seems in many companies that an individual contributor becomes a manager with a slap on the back and the remit to 'give it a go'. How did this become normal? Does it mean that the employee experience does not matter to us? Are employees not our most valuable asset after all?

The best gamification firms out there believe strongly in the power of simulations, and offer a breadth of simulations in a range of areas, including leadership, change management, coaching, trust, project planning and so on. These form part of immersive learning journeys, which are usually complemented by top-class facilitators, thought-leading research, and interactive and varied delivery modes.

Another of Knolskape's simulations is iLead, where players take on the role of a sales head in charge of a team to see how well they can adapt and flex their leadership styles. It's simply more engaging—you will rarely see the levels of immersion, focus and self-reflection found in such sessions in traditional workshops.

So, is it time to shake things up a little in your organisation? I challenge you to think of a few areas where the employee experience can be invigorated through gamification. It really is time to welcome fun back to town!