Using Gamification **to Engage** Employees

Engaged employees are essential for business success, but motivating workers today is more difficult than ever. Leading-edge companies are using gamification platforms to drive meaningful behaviors and improve performance across all types of workforces, whether in-house or distributed, hourly or professional.

Engaged employees are your company's most important asset. They're absolutely critical to the customer experience and to your business performance overall. According to research from the Corporate Leadership Council, highly-committed employees try harder (57%), perform better (20%) and are less likely to leave (87%). In addition, Forrester recently concluded that companies with higher employee engagement ratings boast higher profit margins and deliver better customer outcomes, as measured by customer satisfaction, loyalty and likelihood-to-recommend scores.

But, here's the rub: Most companies have trouble keeping their workforces engaged. In fact, Gallup found that worldwide, only 13% of employees are engaged at work! Of the remaining 87%, more than half (63%) are not engaged, and 24% are actively disengaged.

Why are employees so disengaged? There's a long list of reasons. We live in an age of distraction. Workforces are distributed. Companies tend to focus on ineffective (and seemingly endless) training courses, rather than meaningful learning and employee development. Some even say there's too much to know. That's why businesses that can engage their employees and motivate them to learn and develop new skills will have a huge advantage in the marketplace.

Over the past few years, gamification has proven an effective tool for motivating employees. But before diving into those specifics, let's take a look at what we know about engagement and motivation, in a more general sense.

Use gamification to:

Drive employee development and higher revenue per employee

- *Focus teams on business priorities and goals*
- *Encourage collaboration and healthy competition*
- *Enhance self-driven learning and knowledge sharing*
- *Improve key business metrics specific to each role (quota achievement, issue resolution, product ideation, process alignment, etc.)*

Improve talent retention and recruitment

- *Gain greater visibility into what motivates different employee groups*
- *Increase engagement by providing employees visibility into their impact on the business*
- *Clarify goals, metrics, status and reputation*
- *Deliver real-time feedback on performance*

Accelerate onboarding

- *Ensure participation and effectiveness of training programs*
- *Accelerate ongoing use of learning management resources*
- *Promote collaborative learning*

How to cultivate a state of sustained engagement

Sustained, focused engagement is incredibly powerful, and yet exceedingly evasive — which is why we relentlessly pursue it at work and in our private lives. We pay consultants enormous sums of money to help focus our organizations; we create internal initiatives to help focus our teams, and we buy books and attend workshops to help us focus day-to-day. We've all experienced the euphoria of being highly focused and productive, and we crave it — perhaps now more than ever, because it's so difficult to achieve.

When do people engage and become focused? It happens in situations with:

1. A clearly defined **goal**
2. A system of measurable **progress** leading to that goal
3. A notion of **status** as a result of achieving the goal
4. A **reward** for reaching the goal

When presented with a defined goal, a measurable sense of progress, a notion of status and meaningful rewards, employees can become focused. Why does this happen? Because these conditions tap into our sense of intrinsic motivation.

The five key intrinsic motivators

Motivation is either intrinsic (initiating an activity for its own sake because it is interesting and satisfying in itself) or extrinsic (some external force is influencing, motivating or requiring you to do something). Most studies have shown that intrinsic motivators are more powerful than extrinsic motivators, and at Bunchball, we know that five specific intrinsic motivators have the most impact:

1. **Autonomy — "I control."** Autonomy in the workplace exists on a continuum — from jobs where employees have none and are told exactly what to do, to jobs where employees have all the autonomy they want, whenever they want it, as long as the work gets done – and everywhere in-between.
2. **Mastery — "I improve."** Getting better at things is satisfying on a number of fronts. For some employees, it means the job gets easier. For others, it brings the psychic and possibly financial rewards that come from doing something that 1) couldn't be done before and 2) not everyone else can do.
3. **Purpose — "I make a difference."** Every employee needs to feel like they're making a difference and that their efforts and accomplishments have meaning.
4. **Progress — "I achieve."** People respond well when they see that they are making progress on something they care about, whether in the workplace or in life.
5. **Social Interaction — "I connect with others."** Humans are innately social creatures, and we want to connect, interact, affiliate, care and share. We also want to be recognized, and we want to understand and be understood.

Unfortunately, very few employers integrate these intrinsic motivators into the workplace. As a result, more and more employees disengage… and then, business performance suffers.

Gamification can change all that. Gamification has been shown to be incredibly effective at motivating employees — and this motivation leads to greater satisfaction, which in turn fuels employee retention, customer satisfaction and business results. Gamification works because it satisfies intrinsic motivators and inspires people to take action that matters to the business; it's about motivating active participation — which is much more powerful than having employees who are passive consumers of content or who perform tasks simply because someone told them to.

Gamification is no game

For decades, software developers have been using data-driven motivational techniques to design highly addictive gaming experiences. Gamification leverages those same, science-based, data-driven motivational techniques and applies them to non-game contexts to create powerful tools for business.

So the end result is not a game . . . and it's not a traditional "winner takes all" contest, either. The end result is a data-driven motivation strategy that harnesses the innately competitive nature of your employees, while engaging them in the activities, content and systems that are most meaningful to their productivity and your business success.

To be effective, gamification must combine three essential components: the latest research about motivation, big data analytics, and the ability to efficiently and effectively evolve the program for sustained engagement.

- **Motivation.** Social-science research continues to fine-tune our understanding of how to motivate people. Once you learn how to truly inspire your employees, you can adapt your strategies accordingly.
- **Big data analytics.** Technology has taken over how we communicate, socialize, work and play. Smart businesses are capturing that data, analyzing it and then using those insights to motivate employees — and partners and customers, too. Today's sophisticated analytics provide actionable insights, new realizations that you can use to fuel active, meaningful and sustained participation.
- **Scale & Sustainability.** Unlike contests, events and stunts that take significant resource to administer and drive only temporary sprints in performance gains, real gamification provides a foundation for continued motivation, performance and business insights. The right strategy and platform helps organization drive both sustained engagement, as well as a channel for driving new behaviors as business needs evolve.

By integrating actionable insights with what we know about human motivation, gamification can help you promote high value behaviors throughout your enterprise, delivering new business insights to fuel greater performance and clearly measurable business results.

Real world examples: Measuring business impact

Because gamification is data-driven, it can be used across any type of workforce, whether in-house or distributed, hourly or professional. By tracking activities and responses to incentives, gamification can help employers not only identify and reward high-performing employees, but also determine why certain employees are high-performers. Then, those invaluable behaviors can be cultivated across the enterprise.

Here's a small sampling of how Bunchball customers are putting gamification to work to increase employee engagement and drive revenue:

T-Mobile uses gamification to improve employee learning and the customer experience. To promote quick adoption of its "T-Community" social business environment, T-Mobile integrated gamification and began rewarding customer service and in-store reps when they searched for information, posted new inquiries, answered peer questions and "liked" valuable content. After implementing the gamification module into T-Community, T-Mobile saw:

- 30,000 T-Mobile call center and store employees regularly using the T-Community

- More than 15,000 frontline employees complete a set of self-guided tutorials

- Month-over-month improvement of call resolution rates and customer satisfaction scores

- Widespread employee collaboration resulting in:
    — 96% increase in participation
    — 583% increase in contributions
    — 783% increase in responses
    — 31% improvement in customer satisfaction scores

RMH/Applebee's uses gamification to reduce turnover. The restaurant industry is notorious for high turnover rates among hourly employees. Consider this: Average turnover for hourly-employed bank tellers is labeled "high" when it reaches 30%; but the average turnover for hourly-employed restaurant workers is 125%! As a way to buck this trend, RMH Franchise Corporation, which operates more than 130 Applebee's restaurants, implemented "Bee Block," a gamified website for Applebee's hourly employees. When logged in, employees can manage their profiles, review their own data and participate in challenges – which are automated and broadcast in real-time via "Bee TVs" placed strategically throughout restaurant workstations. By tapping into the motivations of its hourly workforce, Applebee's has improved employee engagement, and is starting to show a significant reduction in turnover.

The Power of a Platform

A successful gamification program is more than points, badges and leaderboards — those are the visible accouterments of gamification and they're important, but only if they map to your business needs and the intrinsic motivators of your employees. Ultimately, it's the underlying gamification strategy that drives success, and that strategy must define business objectives, identify desired behaviors and create an outstanding user experience. A well-designed engagement platform engages users, monitors results, generates insights, measures business impacts and evolves to support perpetual learning and improvement. It's this two-pronged approach — having insights into individual performance coupled with the ability to continually adapt — that makes a gamification platform so powerful for motivating workforces. With a gamification platform, you can harness the innately competitive (and/or collaborative) nature of your employees, while engaging them in the activities, content and systems that are most meaningful to their productivity and your company's business success.

How can gamification help you motivate your employees, reward high-value behaviors and ultimately, drive more revenue for your business? For more information, visit biworldwide.com/gamification.

About Bunchball

BI WORLDWIDE's Bunchball Nitro is the industry's leading engagement technology powered by gamification. Purpose-built for the enterprise, BI WORLDWIDE's proven engagement solutions motivate employee, partner and customer behaviors while delivering the performance intelligence needed to drive business results. An early visionary, Bunchball wrote the book on gamification with the 2013 best seller Loyalty 3.0, and is widely credited for numerous market innovations, including a patent for Gamification as a Service. More than 400 enterprise customers rely upon Bunchball for the company's expertise, innovations and proprietary analytics that deliver proven business results, and Bunchball is the partner of choice to industry leaders. In April 2018, Bunchball was purchased by BI WORLDWIDE to increase its impact on employee motivation and sales effectiveness. Learn more at www.biworldwide.com/gamification, read the blog at www.biworldwide.com/blog, or follow @biworldwide on Twitter.