



Should You “Gamify” Your Small Business?

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It’s human nature to be competitive, and many of us compete by playing games. Be it team sports, board games, video games, or even office-related games, many of us participate in some form of game on a regular basis. This idea of competition and gaming has been used by major businesses for years through loyalty and rewards programs, but the expense of such programs often prohibited small businesses from taking part. Now that mobile technologies have become commonplace, more and more small businesses are turning to gamification to boost customer loyalty and sales.¹

Gamification is the incorporation of game elements, such as points, rules of play, competition, etc., into business-related processes. If you’re unsure what this means, just take a look around. Does your credit card earn you points? Are you the top contributor in a LinkedIn group? Is there an app on your phone to help you stay fit? If you answered yes to any of these, then you’ve experienced gamification—the application of game elements to non-game settings.²

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Tip of the Month



Managing a Project Means Making Trade-Offs

A project’s **scope, schedule, and budget** all affect what you can achieve. So if you tweak one of these factors, on purpose or as a result of circumstances, you’ll have to change something else. For example, if your time frame for developing a new database is cut, this change in schedule means you’ll have to hire more people (and therefore, up the budget). Or, you’ll have to deliver a sys-

tem with fewer features which means you must reduce the project scope. You’ll face many similar trade-offs when managing a project. The point is: don’t panic. If you know from the start which of these three is most important to your stakeholders, you’ll be able to make the right trade-offs. Reducing the scope and completing a less ambitious product isn’t necessarily a bad thing — as long as it still needs of the end users, and fits the budget and schedule. Just keep your

stakeholders in the loop. You’ll spot trade-offs long before they do, so tell them when you want to make changes and negotiate to reach a solution. Adapted from “Managing Projects (20-Minute Manager).”



“...before you make gamification a part of your small business, it’s important to list and review the business’s main objectives and what the overall end goals are. If gamification doesn’t necessarily fit into those objectives, it will feel tacked on and pointless. In that case, implementing it might not be the best idea.”

-Rick Delgado
Leveraging Gamification for your Small Business



Gamification is becoming increasingly popular as today’s tech-savvy consumers want more engaging experiences. As standard marketing techniques have become less effective with younger demographics, companies have begun to add interactive features. According to Gabe Zichermann, author of *Game-Based Marketing*:

“Traditional marketing is failing because people are seeking more reward and engagement from experiences than ever before. Younger generations are more game-attuned than previous generations... Gamification is needed to make things engaging enough so people will pay attention to the product or business and stay focused for a longer period of time.”³

Customer gamification

The majority of customer-oriented gamification relates to rewards programs and repeat customers. Businesses who have successfully implemented these elements usually do so via social media and mobile apps. Repeat customers gain points for each purchase and when they reach a certain level receive a freebie or a rebate. This in turn drives the need to keep purchasing and to “win”.

What are the benefits of gamification? More loyalty from customers means increased revenue. Engagement across mobile apps can also lead to more brand awareness as customers share information and updates over social media; they essentially become brand advocates. Using gamification mobile apps also gives businesses access to valuable data about customer behavior—what they buy, when they make a purchase, their contact information and more.⁴

Examples of gamification

Gamification is used by businesses and organizations to motivate employees, create healthy competition among teams, generate buzz, and encourage customer loyalty, among other benefits. Some examples of gamification:

- **U.S. Army** uses gamification to attract new recruits and generally promote awareness of the U.S. armed forces.
- **Jillian Michaels** encourages users to stay on track with their fitness programs using gamification techniques for a number of fitness challenges.
- **Pierce County Library** makes use of gamification to encourage teens to read throughout the summer with a series of challenges designed to take teens on “an epic journey” and track progress against other teens.
- **Recyclebank** rewards users for doing everyday things that are good for the environment like purchasing greener products—specifically with the Recyclebank logo.
- **Step2** (makers of children’s products) gets parents involved by writing reviews and



engaging with other parents to create “buzz” around Step2 products earning points for their reviews.⁵ (Buzz marketing is a technique that makes each encounter with a consumer appear to be a unique, spontaneous personal exchange of information instead of a calculated marketing pitch by a professional advertiser.)

Is gamification for you?

In the article, *Leveraging Gamification for your Small Business*, Rick Delgado states that though implementing gamification in a small business may seem difficult, it has become much easier in recent years. But before you make gamification a part of your small business, it’s important to list and review the business’s main objectives and what the overall end goals are. If gamification doesn’t necessarily fit into those objectives, it will feel tacked on and pointless. In that case, implementing it might not be the best idea.

Implementing gamification

If you still think gamification is a strategy your business would like to use, Delgado says there are a number of tools available that work well for small businesses on a tight budget. Tools like MyTown, SCVNGR, Perkiwauke, and Perka offer services that allow small businesses to set up points and rewards systems that customers can use through their mobile devices. These platforms, and others like them, often come at relatively cheap rates and are easy to access. But it’s also important to decide which behaviors lead to which rewards. The design for the points program should be intuitive, clearly connecting the effort to the reward. Gamification should also naturally grow out of behaviors customers are already exhibiting instead of forcing them to do things that may be uncomfortable for them. And lastly, if you’re still unsure about implementing a gamification program, you can always try it on a small scale first and see if it yields results before expanding it.

Gamification is a relatively new field in which companies are still experimenting. With new, more accessible technology, small businesses now have the opportunity to run rewards programs with their customers on a larger scale. The benefits can be significant, as customers become more loyal and sales get a boost.⁶

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