The ROI of Game-Based Training

How Games can Improve Engagement, Participation, and Effectiveness

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Bringing Fun to the Office: The Benefits of Game-Based Learning

With so many employees still working from home and many feeling stressed, anxious, and overwhelmed, game-based learning can be that "magic elixir" that adds just the right amount of fun and levity that your team needs.

Games Can Help Reduce Stress and Ease Anxiety

While our personal and professional lives may have changed the last few years, it's more important than ever to remain connected with our work colleagues and find little ways to enjoy ourselves. We're talking about regular, old-fashioned fun. Who remembers what it's like to have fun during work?

Instead of becoming complacent with never-ending Zoom meetings, it's critical that organizations design training strategies that bring in-office and remote employees together, capture their attention, keep them engaged, and make them into more productive team members.

❯ What Is Gamification?

Traditionally, people use the term "work-life-balance" to describe a separation between their careers and personal lives; the first focused on business and the second focused on fun. However, companies that successfully deploy gamification strategies engage workers, improve happiness and morale, and blur the lines between work and play.

Gamification is the application of game-based elements (games, points, badges, leaderboards, competition, rewards, etc.) in real-world activities to increase audience engagement. By deploying these tactics, companies accelerate the learning process, improve retention rates, and promote a fun environment. In fact, 80% of employees enjoy game-based learning at work more than traditional training methods.

An impactful and successful game-based learning program includes:

- Identifying the core business goals and how gamification can help achieve them.

- Investing in Instructional Designers who can develop and run a successful training.

- Developing programs that have fun aspects to engage the learner in friendly competition and provide a sense of personal achievement.

- Testing the employee experience and continuously improving the concept.

Fun Training Games That Promote the Power of Play

Depending on the industry, training content, and audience there are several games worth considering to engage your employees.

Some games are ideal for powering up your asynchronous learning, such as:

- **Wheel of Fortune®:** Train concepts through familiar word puzzles.

- **Jump:** Challenge employees with a twitch-style game that challenges players to reach new heights by targeting boosts, avoiding obstacles, and answering questions.

- **Match 3:** Excite employees with the most popular casual game mechanic, in which they must create identical combinations of three or more icons and answer questions along the way.

You can also turn single player games into multiplayer experiences and take your training from solitary and dull to social and fun.

Many games provide opportunities for networking and collaboration, even in a virtual setting, including:

- **JEOPARDY!®:** Create categories and quizzes in a popular game format to increase retention.

- **Trivia:** Encourage employee relationships through trivia questions based on each other.

Building a fun training game may take trial and error to determine what best fits the business objectives and employee preferences. No matter what game you decide to implement, it needs to be motivating, entertaining, and rewarding for employee engagement.

If you've used games and are ready to level up, consider creating your own arcade and fill it with games, activities, challenges, videos, learning content, points, badges, leaderboards, and prizes. By creating a destination filled with daily challenges you will reduce learning friction, eliminate boring training, and see a significant increase in engagement and knowledge retention.

> Benefits of Implementing Fun Game-Based Learning

There's a clear connection between building a productive environment and a fun one. Tapping into the power of play allows businesses to stimulate employees' learning retention and improve company culture. Here are a few important benefits of using gamification in the office.

1. Minimizes Stress and Anxiety

Since the start of the pandemic, employees have continued to face increased stress and anxiety. In fact, 49% of employees report having less energy, and 44% of managers observe decreased employee morale. Playing games during training releases endorphins, which help people better cope with mental health issues. Beneficial to new and veteran team members, the social interaction from games helps employees reduce isolation and get to know each other more. After all, happier employees are more likely to pay attention to and engage with your training, which results in higher retention rates.

2. Builds Relationships With Peers

With millions[9] of people still working from home, it's more important than ever to help employees establish positive professional connections. Playing games together encourages team bonding and helps resolve conflict. Games can help your employees learn about their peers and cut out the awkward small talk so that they can more effectively collaborate.

3. Creates Organized Fun

Let's be honest—no one enjoys sitting through long meetings and being talked to by a presenter. Game-based learning makes training interactive and fun. Consider breaking up training with a mind map or brainstorming activity that forces employees to critically think and engage with the material. Challenging employees to practice and apply what they are learning is key, and gamified training gives employees a fun and safe place to try, fail, learn, and succeed.

> To make the most of organized fun, implement the following practices in the training:
>
> - **Motivate:** Provide incentives that encourage employees to engage with the material.
>
> - **Make it relevant:** Offer actionable takeaways between the training and the employee's job function.
>
> - **Remediate:** Give immediate feedback so learners understand what they can do to improve.

4. Boosts Innovation and Productivity

Of course, any game-based learning program needs to meet business objectives and focus on overall improvement. Our employees' successes aren't tied to the amount of work or training they complete, but the quality of what they produce afterward. Gamification gives employees a chance to take a step back from a challenging task to refresh their minds and see things from a new perspective. Once they unlock their creative side and break through any psychological barriers, they're more likely to develop innovative ideas that boost productivity.

> ### Discover Fun Ways to Encourage the Power of Play At Work

Adding an element of play will help promote work engagement and build a culture that makes your employees want to keep working.

To build a fun work environment through game-based learning, consider the following methods:

- Develop games that help employees interact with each other to build lasting relationships.

- Challenge employees with concepts to tap into their creative and problem-solving skills.

- Break up meetings with games to refresh employees' minds and help them see new perspectives.

- Provide incentives that motivate employees to engage and learn.

Whether building a standalone training game or a robust gamification training program, it's essential to develop a strategy that meets your business objectives and improves the overall employee experience.

Virtual Onboarding: How to Engage Remote Workers From the Start

Remote work has transitioned from a temporary solution to a "new normal" for millions of workers. With these workers at home and isolated from their co-workers, engaging them in the first days on the job is more important than ever.

While some organizations were equipped with remote collaboration tools, many of us face the challenge of onboarding new employees in a virtual environment. With 97% of employees open to remotely onboarding with a new employer, companies need to develop virtual training programs that provide an engaging and immersive experience.

How can we ensure new talent understands our business's value and culture? Is it possible to still create a fun environment online that encourages learning?

Four Best Practices
for Virtual Onboarding

Let's explore a few virtual onboarding best practices to ensure employees are not only set up for success in their role but also feel a part of the team culture.

1. Keep Everyone Accountable

When working remotely, managers aren't able to quickly check in with new employees to make sure the onboarding process is running smoothly. To keep everyone involved on track, both managers and trainees need to have clear instructions, expectations, and goals.

Consider implementing:

- A meet-and-greet road map that documents the onboarding process.

- Virtual mentors who guide the employee with resources and value.

- Regular video calls to answer questions and put a face to the name.

With a successful structure, virtual onboarding plans will ensure new employees experience an informative and engaging training.

2. Establish an Efficient Work Environment

Once structure and accountability are established, it's essential to have the right tools in place to support your virtual training program. Depending on how long the training is, you may need to invest in project management and storage tools and develop a plan to distribute technology like laptops and keyboards. With so many working adults depending on a computer, it's essential to work with IT teams to establish guidelines for new employees working remotely with technology.

❯ 3. Provide a Cultural Experience

In a typical onboarding training session, you would provide information on company history, values, and culture. However, within a new reality, building company culture and making new hires feel included is challenging.

To establish a company culture within virtual training, include:

- Virtual team happy hours for employees to get to know each other.

- Remote first-day lunches to help people feel welcomed.

- Photos and videos that demonstrate your history, events, etc.

- An internal newsletter to keep everyone informed.

- A "culture mentor" to help ease employees into the company.

Additionally, keep the team in communication by regularly scheduling video calls and instant messaging so new employees feel included.

❯ 4. Gamify the Experience

It's our belief that every successful virtual onboarding plan needs to include one last crucial element: fun! Managers can incorporate game-based elements, including games, activities, competitions, points, badges, and rewards, to help boost engagement and motivate new hires early on. Through leading a company based on this very principle, we've witnessed firsthand how game elements help people feel more socially connected. Making this a core part of your strategy can help to build an engaging work environment that encourages community and fun in the onboarding process.

Consider gamifying the following activities to elevate virtual onboarding:

- Performing an org-chart scavenger hunt.

- Reviewing tasks in a project management system.

- Getting familiar with HR guidelines and handbooks.

- Playing icebreakers to learn more about fellow peers.

By finding ways to build gamification into the onboarding process, managers can provide tasks and incentives in a fun way to communicate more about everything the company has to offer.

Create a Better Virtual Onboarding Experience

With remote work here to stay, it's essential to create a virtual onboarding experience that gets new hires engaged, improves their knowledge and increases their retention. After all, employees are the engine of our businesses. The better our people, the faster and more smoothly our businesses will run.

How IT Cosmetics Gamified Its Training, Moving From PDF to Passport Journey

Shannon Pirie Charles, Group Vice President of Education at IT Cosmetics, wanted to create an interactive training program as engaging as Instagram and as addictive as Candy Crush. She got it and more in a customized Learning Management System from The Game Agency.

The Development Process and Lessons Learned

For a young cosmetics brand, it's challenging to ensure that products are known and highlighted in the open-sell environment. IT Cosmetics, a division of L'Oreal and top beauty brand sold
at ULTA Beauty, QVC, Sephora, and a variety of other retailers, set out to find creative ways to make fast facts and information available at their educator's fingertips. In 2018 Shannon Pirie Charles, Group Vice President of Education asked, "In an open-sell environment like Sephora and Ulta, education is pivotal and we are constantly asking ourselves…how do we stand out?"

> **"I didn't want to create another app where someone just checked the box to show they did it."**

It was easier for IT Cosmetics when they had fewer employees and mostly sold in the United States. But as the sales and education team grew, with products sold in 22 countries, the video calls, emails, and oversized PDFs weren't enough anymore. Charles' team was putting out fires as educators internationally called last-minute for training materials.

She thought a training app was the answer, but the ones she saw were boring. "I didn't want to create another app where someone just checked the box to show they did it," Charles said. Traditional training videos with two people modeling sales techniques? "Those are painful," she said. Most of the games offered in training apps? "They're the games no one plays, except maybe my grandma." Instead, Charles wanted to make her educators' lives easier, providing a solution for people to get all the training information when and wherever they wanted. Sharing her vision at an international IT Cosmetics leadership presentation a few years back, she said, "I'm going to create something as engaging as Instagram and as addictive as Candy Crush."

The Journey
-Where IT All Begins -

> ### The First Steps: Making Decisions

Charles fell into cosmetics training through sales management. But she also has a master's degree in clinical counseling and worked with teen boys diagnosed with ADHD. Not only can she read people well, she knows that in today's TikTok environment people don't have the time or attention span for product lectures. She needed something different to get the educators to click, learn, and stay interested.

Her interviews with a handful of gamification agencies were disappointing. She saw good graphics, but not the level of creative thinking she wanted. She perked up during the last interview on her list with The Game Agency. With them, she saw a willingness to think outside the box. "I felt like I could rock the boat, push back, and ask to do things differently," Charles said. "When I came up with an idea, I didn't want to hear 'no,' I wanted to hear 'let's try it.'" And try it they did.

IT Cosmetics wanted to highlight that education is a journey and we are always evolving and learning. The Game Agency developed The Journey, a platform with a global travel theme, incorporating famous landmarks and their cosmetics products for branding in the Motivate Cloud Learning Management System (LMS). Users get a virtual passport showing their personal information, accomplishment levels, and badges, plus their flight path leading them to the next learning module on their gamified journey. IT Cosmetics chose custom animations to make it more fun, something that's not mandatory, "but it goes further in building interest and is more engaging to the users," said Creative Director Allan Rust of The Game Agency.

> "IT Cosmetics wanted to highlight that education is a journey and we are always evolving and learning."

Building a Comprehensive Platform

The LMS contains games, a searchable community forum, and an interactive EDU manual. The Game Agency's Training Arcade includes a suite of 10 games with educational components, which can include a customized skin and game elements. Educators at one of Charles' in-person training sessions played JEOPARDY!® in the platform, with IT Cosmetics content. The company customized a "Jump" game using their own moisturizers as the jumper, with a branded background. IT Cosmetics can build new games all by themselves now, in a matter of hours, and add them to their LMS.

Charles launched the new training platform to U.S. educators in October 2019, rolling it out to the other 22 countries this year. "As an educator, you look for the lightbulb moments," she said. "When we launched it for the first time, I saw on their faces I made the right decision."
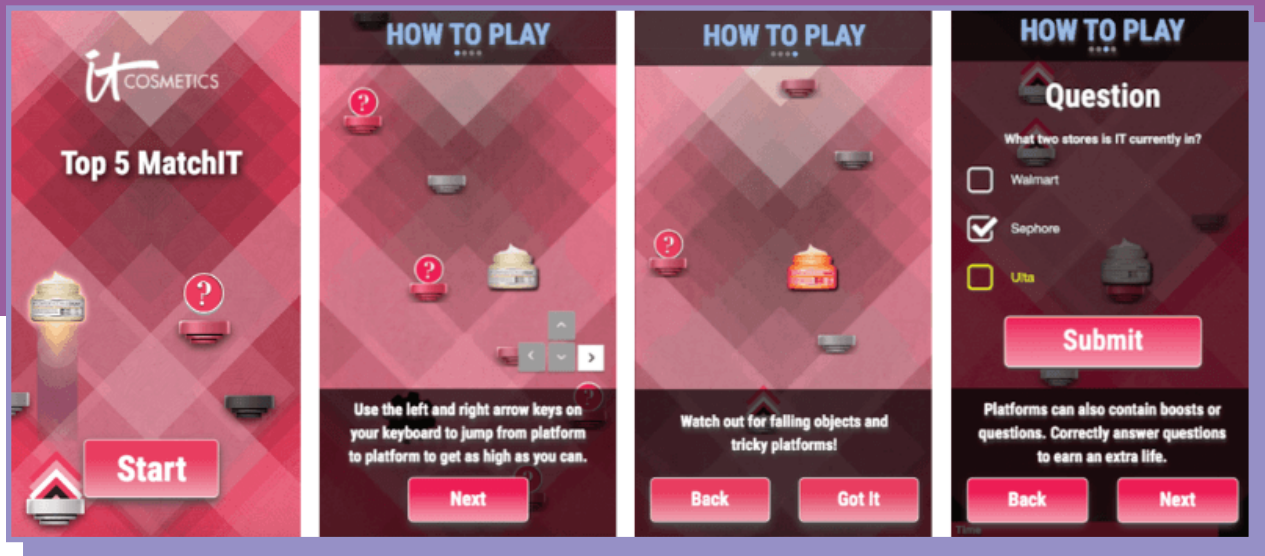
Sample IT Cosmetics game from The Training Arcade®

One of the big hits is a simple interactive program showing test tubes of ingredients. Users click the tubes to determine what's in the CC+ Cream. The user then "builds" the cream. This is popular and memorable as an open-selling floor demonstration tool, as it creates hype and showcases the product. It's also a great way to get educators to engage with the platform on their own time.

IT Cosmetics incentivizes its educators on their training journey with rewards for completing modules and interacting with the community. They offer tangible gifts like products and branded items, but also experiences, like Charles coming to sell with them for the day, and taking the team to dinner.
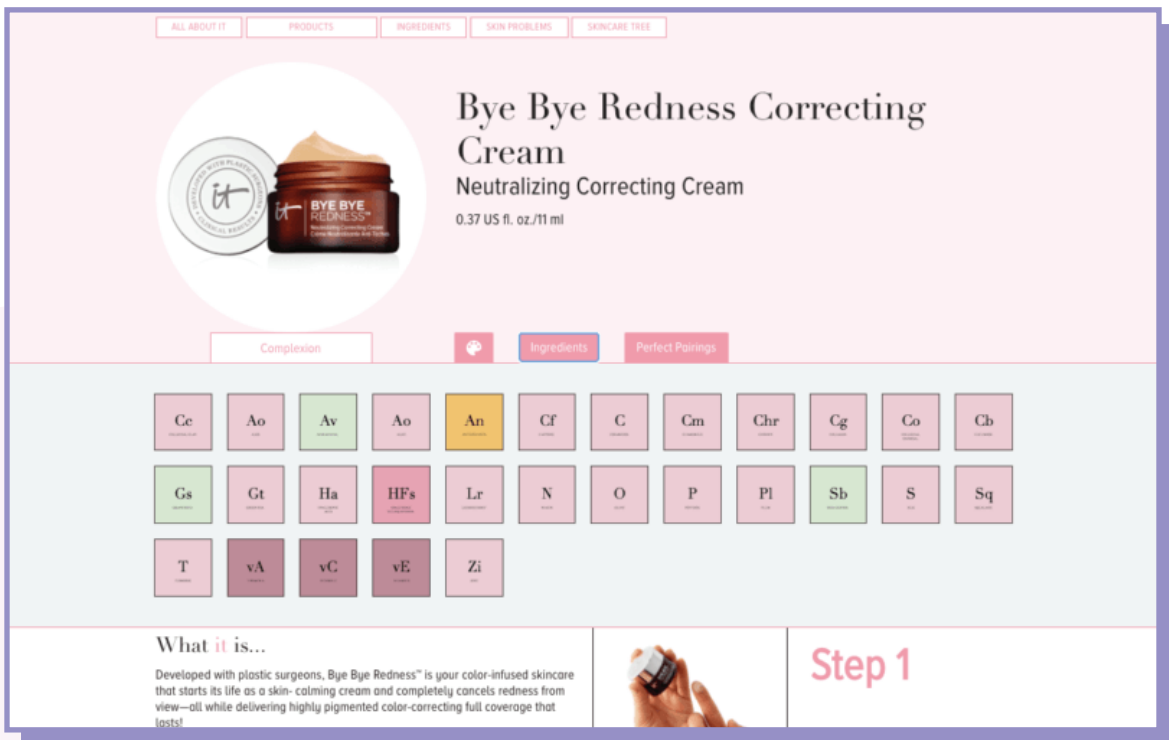
An image from the opening animation of IT Cosmetics' Journey LMS

The Motivate Cloud platform navigation buttons can be quickly toggled into eight languages (and the Training Arcade games into 17 languages). Clients provide all educational content and are responsible for translations. "We give them the ability to download localization sheets so a localization company can update the content for another language," said Rust.

❯ Ease Of Use

The games and forums are fun and helpful, but Charles said the main attraction is the EDU manual. The original manual was a 900 MB PDF document, often too large to download, sometimes rendering it useless when in the field. The document was updated twice a year, with all staff members poring over the physical copy. It took a month each time to identify product changes while tagging up to 19 associated pages per product needing updates as well. The guidebook was outdated within weeks of publication, and the staff dreaded the process.

Sample image from interactive EDU manual in which employees can search all products by color, ingredients, and pairings

The new manual requires no downloading. It's a living document on the LMS, updated as needed by IT Cosmetics. Updating product information means changing a field in an Excel file, which automatically populates to the appropriate places on the website. "In less than an hour, it's updated on the site," Charles said.

IT Cosmetics can create and upload new interactive micro-slides, videos, and games along with PDFs on a daily basis. The platform puts all training resources in one place.

Lessons Learned in Creating a Gamified Learning Platform

Shannon Pirie Charles demonstrating IT Cosmetics application process

Charles said she learned some lessons in creating the LMS. Given that she had a vision for this platform, she wished she brought developers into a "train the trainer" session earlier, so they could better understand the IT Cosmetics training process. Doing so a few months into the working relationship proved to move the vision from her brain into a custom platform for everyone to experience. She recommends this step for every company developing an LMS. "When you're both speaking the same language, that's where the magic happens," she said.

She also didn't realize upfront the amount of work needed on IT Cosmetics' end to make their program digital. Charles initially thought they could just give The Game Agency the PDF manual to create the EDU document. However, in the lipstick category alone, there were 12 lipsticks and every color needed different photos and coding.

In rolling out the program, IT Cosmetics rerouted all information requests coming via phone and email to the LMS. Charles said it's important to model the behavior she wants by asking educators if they've checked the LMS when they have a question.

Moving Into the Future With Gamified Training

While this LMS was in the works before the pandemic, it's even more useful now due to the transition to remote work. The Motivate Cloud platform educates, activates, and celebrates employees making it especially helpful for those newer in the job or who work in a more remote area. Charles says, "The feedback is phenomenal both internally and among IT Cosmetics's sister companies," who are looking for their own custom experiences. Gamified training is the wave of the future.

Training Software & a Gamification Platform All-in-One

The Training Arcade® offers everything you need to create online training games rapidly and easily.

The Training Arcade® is a game builder and gamification software with a library of 10 online training games (including the only officially licensed JEOPARDY!® and Wheel of Fortune® game for training, education, and events).

Our gamification platform, Arcades™, includes all the gamification elements (leaderboards, badges, achievements, journeys, prizes, and head-to-head challenges) you need to motivate your team.

This first-of-its-kind online training software works seamlessly across mobile, tablet, PC, and touchscreen devices and can be used for eLearning, instructor-led training, live events, and virtual conference calls!

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