Gamification

The 10 game mechanics with the power to engage your employees and transform your organization

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Introduction

Gamification might sound new and shiny... but the concept has been around for generations. In our experience there are TEN game mechanics that are at the heart of gamification—and over the following pages we'll show you just how they already appear in your everyday life. This is simple proof that gamification has the power to engage us and influence our behavior. It turns out you're already a gamification expert, and so are your employees. That's exactly why it can have such a powerful impact on your organization.

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Game Mechanic #1: Badges & Home Depot

Let's start patching-up the definition of gamification at Home Depot.

The scent of sawdust, aisles of power tools and yes those iconic orange aprons. Home Depot is a great example of gamification. Take a close look at those fashionable aprons and you might notice a clip of patches pinned proudly on the Sales Associate's chest. Home Depot awards a patch to employees as they gain credentials in specific departments or skills. Looking to spiff-up your petunias? Find the person with a gardening patch.

Badges motivate people. We generally crave outward recognition; gamification simply creates a digital version. You complete a challenge assigned through your dashboard (to add a skill or acquire more knowledge) and get a **Badge** displayed on your profile; simple as that. No more paper awards to lose, or patches to sew—it's all right there on your dashboard.

And **badges** can inspire conversation and idea sharing. Other employees can see who has a specific certification and reach out for help or advice accordingly. You always have a record of what trainings you've completed and skills you've added, which can help accelerate your career path.

Gamification simplifies the process of earning and distributing **badges**. If you want to ratchet up engagement, learn from Home Depot's aprons and take it online.

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Game Mechanic #2: Competition & Sibling Rivalry

Do you have a sibling? Kids? It's easy to see our innate competitive nature in all walks of life—particularly sports—when siblings compete.

When one of my twins scores a goal in soccer, before I can put down the camera, my other son is dribbling the ball downfield ready to score. When one of my sons earns a swimming ribbon, I'm surprised if I don't see a second ribbon come home with the other.

The same goes for gamification in the workplace. It ignites a healthy dose of **competition**. Everyone knows who the high performers are and who has the most badges. When a colleague earns a distinction or moves up the leaderboard you want to prove your mettle—like my twins on the soccer field.

Just as you don't want to pit your kids against one another on the field, workplace **competition** needs to be handled with care. Including both team and individual **competition** is one way to keep it friendly. Allowing team members to challenge one another is another way to foster positive esprit de corps and engagement.

Employees thrive when elements of competition are woven into their day-to-day work. Ditch your infrequent **competitions** and engage employees with highly interactive gamified versions, where everyone has real-time access to current scores and standings. Ignite a healthy dose of **competition** by making online gamification the field of play.

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Game Mechanic #3: Fast Feedback & 'Change Your Card'

I want you to close your eyes and imagine.

(Don't actually close your eyes… you'll need them to read) a sunny place where a good day includes traversing the monkey bars, endless finger-painting and a post-lunch game of dodgeball. It's elementary school—the good life until you do something out of line and your teacher utters three words that initiate a walk of shame.

Change. Your. Card.

Perhaps you talked out of turn, pinched your seatmate or were otherwise disruptive, but your teacher was quick to provide **feedback** that your behavior earned a demerit for the day. From the green card, to the yellow card to the dreaded red card, you always knew where you stood. Of course, you could just as easily earn your way back from red to green, with a star sticker for good measure. The key was for **feedback** to come fast—to instantaneously reinforce (positive/negative) behavior.

Gamification is a bit like changing a card or earning a sticker. The basic mechanic is **Fast Feedback**, connecting behavior to results. Are you performing better today than yesterday? How do you compare to co-workers? What did the last five customers say about their interactions with you today (not last week)?

When you provide your people with **Fast Feedback**, through performance reporting and gamification, you replace guesswork with accountability.

Are you struggling to engage your people?

Change. Your. Approach.

How are you delivering **Fast Feedback** to your frontline employees today?

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Game Mechanic #4: Transparency & the Whiteboard Competition

You know that whiteboard that sits in your break room; the one that periodically gets a chart drawn up on it with names and scores during a sales competition?

The numbers get a little smudged and people generally forget about it until an email crowns the winner.

The ol' whiteboard competition was meant to keep everyone informed on performance metrics and to recognize top performers. But it's lackluster, limited to a few names and easily brushed off.

Amp-up **transparency** by moving your contest or competition from the whiteboard to a digital gamification platform. Performance strengths and weaknesses are immediately visible—everyone knows exactly where they stand relative to goals and to teammates. If you're #127 on a KPI, you'd never make it onto the whiteboard, but with a digital leaderboard you suddenly have total visibility into your relative performance. There is no confusion about who is leading, no fussing with individual tracking, and no smudged numbers.

Greater **transparency** also adds value to coaching sessions and goal setting. Supervisors know which people and topics need attention, and they can even assign gamification challenges as action items to prompt their people to add skills and realize their potential.

Whiteboard competitions happen in every office, yet they continually fail to maximize engagement and **transparency**. Swap this conventional tracking method for gamification for real business impact—because seeing is believing.

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Game Mechanic #5: Onboarding & Orientation

Remember summer camp drop off? Anyone with kids (or who has been a kid) and has dropped them off at summer camp can relate.

As you say goodbye and your child walks out to the counselor, what happens next? Does the child get ushered into a room for a PowerPoint presentation on rules and processes? Does the camp give the child time to get bored so they think about how much they will miss their parents and run screaming back to the mini-van? Nope.

Summer camps know that they need to engage their campers during the **onboarding** process. Summer camps fill the first few days with roommate bonding activities, camp tours, games, and countless rounds of the fight song—with different elements connecting with the needs of different individuals. Summer camp is an early introduction to gamification.

New recruits–campers or workers–will respond to a high-energy introduction. So why do most workplaces cling to boring classroom-style training? Why treat everyone as though they are arriving with the same knowledge and skills, rather than a spectrum of talents and needs? Gamification can create new, individual paths that break down the traditional rigidity of **onboarding**.

Much like the color-coded map leading you through the first day of camp activities, gamification allows organizations to customize training activities–guiding new hires to reach maximum effectiveness in the shortest amount of time. Gamification allows individuals to zoom past areas of existing knowledge, and focus on areas that need the most improvement. They set their own pace, which based on third party research and our own experience is proving to be 30-50% faster than the classroom.

Drive employee engagement and incentivize action that aligns new hires around organizational priorities and goals with gamification. Take a page out of the summer camp handbook for your **onboarding** process, and your new hires won't look back for a mini-van escape.

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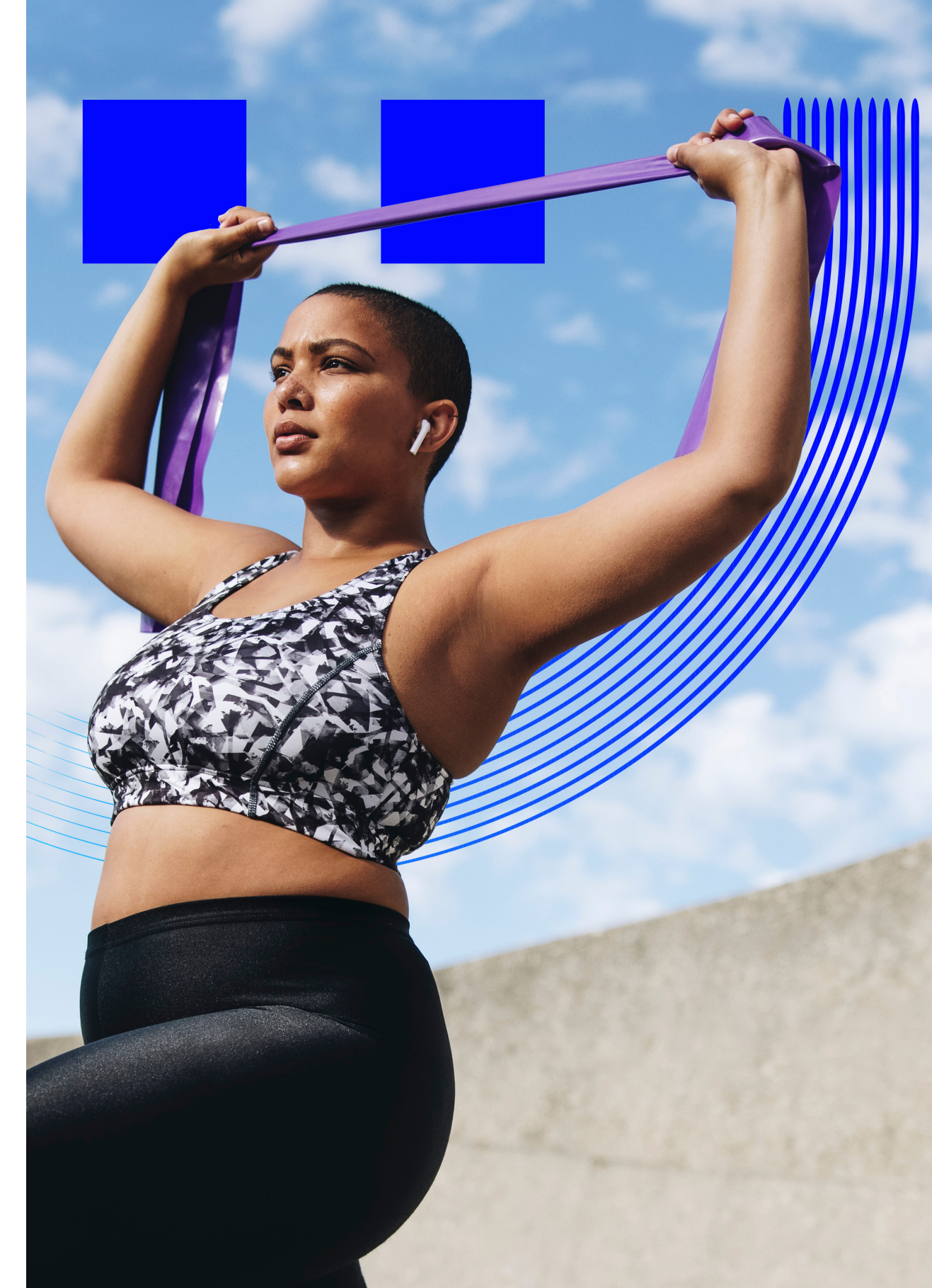# Game Mechanic #6: Goals & Fitness

The sun comes up and I'm hitting the pavement on a sluggish run, when my playlist is interrupted by a kind British lady telling me I need to kick it into high gear to reach my time goal.

At the end of a workout I can see how my run stacks up against my fitness **goals**. And I can quickly share my results with friends via social media...we can even do a bit of friendly trash talking as we compete. Apps like FitBit, Nike+ and Run Keeper gamify your workout by helping to set **goals**, track progress, and drive accountability with social elements.

Gamification in the workplace is no different when it comes to the basic mechanic of **Goal** Setting. Gamification helps set and reinforce the right goals. For example, you can offer points when an employee meets their handle time **goal** for five consecutive days. Or, you can amplify those points when they jointly meet goals for handle time and customer satisfaction over the same time period.

Managers can see the performance **goals** with which employees struggle, and then assign them to complete related gamification challenges, recognizing them when they exceed their targets. That keeps employees focused and injects both fun and reward into the effort to deliver great performance.

Goals can just as easily operate at the group level. A department manager can establish a gamification challenge that rewards the team with the highest productivity rate today, this week or this month. The right technology will always show frontrunners, as well as the movers and shakers that are leaping up the leaderboard. It's time your organization ran with the idea of gamification.

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Game Mechanic #7: Level Up & Starbucks

I'm in line getting a cup of coffee. As I stare mesmerized at the board listing dozens of ways to get a caffeine jolt the person in front of me catches my eye... or rather, their Gold Card catches my eye.

If only I too could drink enough coffee to earn gold! The Starbucks Gold Card is a renowned status marker amongst the caffeine junkies of the world. The basic mechanic here is **levels**, and **leveling-up**.

Starbucks—like many other companies—gamified rewards years ago by creating social hierarchy based on **levels** of spending. Similarly, gamification drives adoption by creating **levels** that reward users for expanding or refining skills and/or adding to their knowledge. A contact center agent at a Financial Services company can complete 'Brokerage Account Level 1' and move on to 'Brokerage Account Level 2'.

Reaching new **levels** opens up new deals and perks in retail. In the workplace, new levels in gamification software open access to new challenges, skills and rewards. **Levels** can be used to encourage exploration.

Some companies are even tying gamification **levels** to career paths. They define the specific **levels** that must be achieved to indicate readiness to advance to a new role or department. Employees can then seek out and complete those levels to demonstrate their interest and aptitude.

Take a page out of Starbucks' Gold Card playbook. Introduce or expand the **levels** in your gamification program to make it the gold standard.

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Game Mechanic #8: Collaboration & Taboo

Refrigerator. Refrigerator. Refrigerator. You scream like they didn't hear you the first time; because you're in a heated game of Taboo and after the first three clues you are at a loss.

Time dwindles and your partner finally says the word "Tupperware". That's the answer you were looking for.

The point is that games aren't only about competition, they are also about inspiring **collaboration**. Taboo demands **collaboration** at the coffee table, while gamification in the workplace creates opportunities for co-workers to help one another succeed.

For example, an employee is competing to earn a Handle Time badge. They're making good progress, but their percentage of silent time when interacting with customers is much higher than average. Gamification allows the employee to see their teammates who have already earned the Handle Time badge, so they can reach out and get advice on how to reduce their % silence from those who've already met the target.

Another place we commonly see **collaboration** is best practice libraries. These are central collections of tips and tricks from top performers. Gamification allows you to reward employees for submitting their ideas, and reviewing (and even rating) those ideas. It drives people to those best practices and keeps them fresh.

When **collaboration** is a central tenet of your gamification program, employees can always find the insight or answer they seek—whether or not that's "Tupperware".

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Game Mechanic #9: Community & Yelp

Finding the right place to eat can be a difficult task.

You want somewhere good but not too pricey. The location needs to be within walking distance. And someone in your group is gluten free. Everyone is starving—just as tensions reach a boiling-point someone pulls out their Yelp app. You find a 4-star, one dollar-sign caf just a block away with 200 reviews raving about the gluten free options. Crisis averted.

In that moment, you rely on the expertise of a **community** of Yelp reviewers. Gamification similarly engages participants with a communal experience. The feeling of everyone being 'in it together' draws co-workers into your gamification program. One person starts talking about a new challenge or quest, suddenly a handful of people are sharing how they beat the quest. Or perhaps that employee pushes the envelope and challenges their peers to out-duel them in the next challenge.

SAP is a great example of a company that has built gamification into their **community**. SAP has more than 100,000 expert users registered for their online **community** site—where customers search for info and ask questions and experts provide free support. Despite the mass of experts, participation was limited; customers were not finding what they needed.

So SAP introduced gamification points. The more answers and ideas an expert contributes, the more points they accumulate. And those points translate into tiers—silver, gold, platinum, etc. That's currency these experts can use; it's prestigious and marketable to be a platinum **community** member.

Yelp has created superstars out of local eateries. SAP has invigorated thousands of experts. You too can energize your workplace and gamification effort with **community**.

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Game Mechanic #10: Points & the Marble Jar

When I was a kid we had a marble jar. Do something good—a random act of kindness, an extra chore or homework without being asked—and you were rewarded with a marble in the jar.

At a certain point you could trade in your marbles for a prize or keep saving and accruing towards something even better.

Points. Marbles. Stars. Checkmarks. The marker doesn't really matter. It's human nature to want to grow the balance. Almost every game has some type of point system and gamification in the workplace is no different.

Take for example the last two contact centers I've walked through. At the first, a large whiteboard was displayed prominently near the site entrance. On it were the names of 5 employees, each with a series of tally marks next to their name. A few workers had taken the time to add cheers and jeers to the board.

At the second, an enterprising supervisor created her own **points** system called 'Kelly Bucks'. Exceed your goals, help a teammate, etc. and earn 'Kelly Bucks'. You could eventually redeem enough 'Bucks' to go home early, select a desirable shift, or get a goodie from Kelly's drawer.

Both cases are simple points systems, and your workplace is undoubtedly using them now. The difference is the whiteboard and the paper 'Bucks' are fleeting. They will be erased physically and mentally. No one will remember who won two months ago. But your gamification platform will.

That record has value. It lets you track employees across time. It makes it easy to identify consistent performers. Everyone knows where they stand at any given moment, and exactly what they need to do to earn the next set of **points**.

Reward positive behavior with the oldest gamification mechanic in the book... points! But move those **points** from some fleeting board or drawer and put them where everyone can see them as a constant source of motivation.

Summary

We've walked through the 10 game mechanics. Does every high-powered gamification program need to use all 10 ? Absolutely not. You have to find the right combination of these mechanics for your organization, to meet your goals.

That's the game.

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