

# Gamification in the Hospitality Industry

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**Content: Gamification, Gamification Techniques in Hotel experience, Professional development, Applications of gamification to hospitality.**

Gamification refers to the use of games and game-related components outside the traditional playground with a serious purpose within organizations or training institutions with an aim to make everyday duties more attractive and pleasant. In the past few years, gamification has emerged as a trend within the business and marketing sectors and has recently grabbed the attention of academics, educators and practitioners. Researchers and practitioners consider that gamification can be used in any process which involves employees. Gamification is not simply playing games. Games create the imaginative world, which differs from reality.

Gamification from the perspective of employer – as a tool to engage employees in some kind of competition and thus contributing to the achievement of organizational goals. Research by American Society for Training & Development in 2013 found that 23% of organizations use gamification in training and development process and 99% of them are sure that this method is effective. Currently, the most common applications of gamification are in the areas of employee performance, innovation management, education, personal development and customer engagement.

KFC Japan partnered with Gamify in order to create a marketing campaign that not only informed customers but also incentivized them to try KFC's new Shrimp products through discounted voucher rewards. The campaign concept was a Fruit Ninja style game, with the story of 'Ebi shrimp' taking over the chicken dominated world of KFC, and it was up to the player to defend the KFC castle. The results were huge, KFC Japan generated an overwhelming amount of sales.

Six underlying factors were analyzed under Gamification Techniques (GT) used in hotels: achievements, collecting, challenge, competition, cooperation and rules. Analyzed data revealed that gamification can be used to act as an interface between employees and hotels, to leverage responsible and ethical working behavior. GT positively contributes to effective communication, social interaction, better informed and more skilled personnel, increased job satisfaction, strategic thinking, positive attitudes toward employment and lead to a satisfied client.

The best games provide a sense of accomplishment. There are plenty of examples where corporations have gamified internal training to quickly teach their employees new skills. For instance, Cisco invented a 46-course global social media training to help its contractors and employees leverage social media skills. By introducing certification and sub-certification levels and collaborative team challenges, Cisco had hundreds of employees obtain the certification. These employees, as they proceeded through the program, felt proud of the certification levels that they obtained.

For example, Fresh Desk has leveraged gamification to incentivize employees to offer fast and effective customer service in response to things like support tickets and customer forums. Gamification can be used to keep employees motivated and engaged—especially in critical tasks like customer service.

To make gamification work most effectively, you ultimately want to design your games to appeal to these basic human needs and desires. By doing so, you may be surprised at how much easier it is to accomplish both large and small organizational goals. Employee Onboarding, Training and Assessment: Hospitality companies have been leveraging gamification into all aspects of the employee experience: from recruitment and professional development to incentivized performance. Everything from the onboarding process to checking off individual and team responsibilities, to learning the

table layout of an establishment, can all be turned into a game. gamification makes the workplace experience more enjoyable for everyone.

#### APPLICATIONS OF GAMIFICATION TO HOSPITALITY

**Ordering App Rewards:** Starbucks, throw out the stamp card in place of an app equivalent that tracks a user's collection of "Stars" (Points) in the lead up to their next free drink. This form of gamification is nothing new, as mentioned before, the stamp card has been around in hospitality long before apps took center stage.

**Social Media Engagement:** One of the easiest ways to engage with your audience with trackable results is to promote competition through your brand's social channels.

**In-store incentives:** With prizes like discounted future visits or freebies. These games can be played on customer phones or in-store mounted tablets/kiosks positioned in parallel with the order line.

**Customer loyalty:** The hospitality industry is ripe for gamification. The most significant benefit for service-based businesses (like those in the hospitality industry) is that they build customer loyalty. By gamifying a core component of your business, you incentivize your customers to stick with your company in order to possibly 'win' the game.

**Better customer service:** There is Trivial Pursuit Hotel in Russia that determines guest rates by the number of trivia questions they answer correctly. By making the experience fun and unique, hotels are better able to distinguish themselves in the marketplace.

As for employees in the hospitality industry, there are clear incentives to gamifying positive customer service outcomes. By making it a game to see which employees can provide the best possible customer service, you can create better customer service in the aggregate.

One of the most obvious examples of this is airline and hotel loyalty programs. Both airlines and hotels have used gamification to spur the competitive nature of their customers and increase the stickiness of their

overall brand. Air Canada, for instance, has created an "Earn Your Wings" promotion that created a leaderboard showing top fliers according to certain metrics like total miles flown.

#### CONCLUSION

Enjoyability is now a vital KPI for any hospitality company. It's what sets apart the ordinary from the unforgettable. With this new focus on enjoyability, hospitality companies are uncovering new sets of data that most industries haven't thought to analyze yet, they're finding new approaches to differentiate their properties in a crowded field, and they're discovering new ways to surprise and delight guests.

Gamification in the hospitality industry can also bring fun and entertainment to the overall customer experience. It can show off a business's unique personality and help separate that business from competitors. Hotels, for instance, have gamified the standard hotel experience.

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