

GAMIFICATION: TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?

DIGITAL SHOREDITCH

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INTRODUCTION

- THIS TALK UNDERTAKES A SIMPLE THOUGHT EXPERIMENT
- SUPPOSE GAMIFICATION **TAKES OFF** AND TWO YEARS FROM NOW IT'S **UBIQUITOUS**
- WILL IT BE UBIQUITOUS FIVE YEARS **LATER?**
- WE KNOW IT **CAN** WORK FOR **INDIVIDUAL** CASES
 - SCIENTOLOGY SUCCESSFULLY GAMIFIED **RELIGION**
- BUT CAN IT WORK **ACROSS THE BOARD** IN A **SUSTAINABLE** FASHION?

INTRODUCTION

- GAMIFICATION IS A TERM SEVERAL **DECADES** OLD
 - **USED** TO MEAN "TURNING SOMETHING NOT A GAME INTO A GAME"
 - **NOW** SEEMS TO MEAN "TURNING A GAME INTO SOMETHING NOT A GAME"
- FORMALLY, IT'S PUTTING **GAME DESIGN PATTERNS** TO NON-GAME USE
 - IMPLIES YOU CAN GAMIFY IN **DIFFERENT** WAYS
 - IT DOESN'T **HAVE** TO BE JUST POINTSIFICATION
 - TYPICALLY IT **IS**, THOUGH, BECAUSE IT'S NOT UNDERTAKEN BY GAME DESIGNERS...

SERIOUS GAMES

- GAMIFICATION DIFFERS FROM "SERIOUS GAMES":
 - SERIOUS GAMES WANT A **GAME** AT THE END OF IT
 - GAMIFICATION DOESN'T
- MOST GAMIFICATION **CAN'T** LEAD TO A GAME
- GAMES ARE **PLAY** YOU CAN **LOSE** AT
- GAMIFIED ACTIVITIES ARE **NOT** PLAY AND YOU **CAN'T** LOSE AT THEM
 - INTERESTINGLY, SERIOUS GAMES **STARTED OUT** USING SIMPLIFIED GAMIFICATION TECHNIQUES BUT **ABANDONED** THEM BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T DELIVER

REWARDS

- A KEY GAMIFICATION ASPECT IS **REWARDS**
- **INTRINSIC** REWARDS ARE **INHERENT** TO AN ACTIVITY ITSELF
 - EG. FORMULATING A **CUNNING PLAN** IN CHESS
 - PLAY IS **ITSELF** ULTIMATELY AN INTRINSIC REWARD
- **EXTRINSIC** REWARDS ARE **ACQUIRED** FOR DOING AN ACTIVITY
 - EG. PHAT LEWT
- GAMIFICATION **EXCLUSIVELY** USES **EXTRINSIC** REWARDS

[OPTIONAL]

- IN **GAMES**, EXTRINSIC REWARDS CAN BE USED FOR A **NUMBER** OF THINGS:
 - TO MAKE **IMPLICIT** PROGRESS **EXPLICIT**
 - XPS MAKE YOUR **CHARACTER** IMPROVE AS **YOU** IMPROVE
 - TO BREADCRUMB PLAYERS THROUGH DIRECTIONLESS CONTENT
 - YES, YOU **WERE** SUPPOSED TO KILL THOSE GUYS
 - TO OPEN UP **NEW** CONTENT OR SHORTCUT **PLAYED-THROUGH** CONTENT
 - WITH THIS **STONE** YOU CAN **TELEPORT** TO THE CITY OF GOLD
 - TO INDICATE THE END OF A **NARRATIVE** CYCLE
 - THAT GUY YOU KILLED WAS THE **BOSS** OF THIS DUNGEON WING
 - TO **HEIGHTEN** THE RESPONSE FROM AN INTRINSIC REWARD
 - NOT ONLY WAS THAT **FUN**, YOU GET **THIS!**

DIFFERENCE

- GAMES TEND TO OFFER EXTRINSIC REWARDS FOR ACTIVITIES THE PLAYER **ALREADY** FINDS FUN
- IN GAMIFICATION, **RECEIPT** OF THE REWARD IS **ITSELF** THE FUN
 - THIS MEANS THE REWARDS DO ACTUALLY HAVE TO BE **WORTH** RECEIVING!
- THEY CAN BE **INTRINSICALLY** VALUABLE
 - A FUN, JAUNTY VICTORY TUNE
- OR **EXTRINSICALLY** VALUABLE
 - POINTS

PROBLEM

- GAMIFICATION IS BASICALLY **BRIBERY**
 - YOU **REWARD** SOMEONE FOR DOING SOMETHING THAT YOU **WANT** THEM TO DO
- IF THE REWARD ISN'T **VALUABLE**, IT'S **NOT A REWARD**
- WARNING: **POINTS** THAT YOU CAN'T TURN INTO GOODS OR SERVICES ARE **NOT VALUABLE!**
- THIS WILL GRADUALLY **DAWN** ON PEOPLE IN **RECEIPT** OF THOSE POINTS
- ONCE PEOPLE RECOGNISE THE **PATTERN** FROM THEIR PAST **EXPERIENCES**, YOU'RE **STUFFED**

NEXT UP

- IF RECEIPT OF **EXTRINSIC** REWARDS IS TAKEN FOR **GRANTED**, IT CAN UNDERMINE **INTRINSIC** REWARDS
 - GOOGLE “OVERJUSTIFICATION EFFECT”
- LEADS TO A **DISASSOCIATION** WITH THE CONTENT
 - WOW’S TORTURE QUEST
- YET REWARDS DON’T **HAVE** TO BE **REGULAR**
- **IRREGULARITY** CAN **ADD** MORE GAMEPLAY **WITHOUT** IMPLYING A GAME

A DARK PATH

- REGULARITY: "PULL THIS HANDLE **20** TIMES AND WE'LL **GIVE** YOU **£1**"
 - EMPLOYMENT, **VANILLA** GAMIFICATION
- IRREGULARITY: "PULL THIS HANDLE AND THERE'S A **5%** CHANCE OF **WINNING** **£1**"
 - GAMBLING, **ADVANCED** GAMIFICATION
- THIS IS STARTING TO LOOK LIKE A VARIABLE RATIO **REINFORCEMENT** SCHEDULE
 - **OPERANT** CONDITIONING
 - **VERY** INTERESTING IF YOU HAVE STUFF TO SELL!

ESCHEWED

- GAME DESIGNERS STUDIOUSLY **AVOID** OPERANT CONDITIONING (FOR EXTRINSIC REWARDS)
 - ITS **NOT FUN**
 - FUN IS **INTRINSIC**, NOT EXTRINSIC
 - ITS AN ADMISSION OF **FAILURE**
 - IT MEANS THE GAMEPLAY IS TOO **WEAK** ON ITS OWN
 - ITS ONLY USABLE ON **NAIVE** PLAYERS
 - ONCE THEY'VE **LEARNED** THE PATTERN, THEY **AVOID** IT
 - ITS **IMMORAL**
 - IT CAN LEAD TO **PSYCHOLOGICAL** PROBLEMS FOR SOME PEOPLE

GAMIFIERS

- WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR **GAMIFIERS**?
 - THEY DON'T **EXPECT** IT TO BE FUN **ANYWAY**
 - THEY READILY **ACKNOWLEDGE** THAT THEIR CONTENT ISN'T COMPELLING
 - IT'S PRECISELY **WHY** THEY'RE GAMIFYING IT!
 - THEY NEED TO **REALISE** THAT THIS IS A **BUBBLE** THAT WILL EVENTUALLY **BURST**
 - THEY SHOULD EXPECT TO BE **SUED** IF THEY **DELIBERATELY** TRY TO **ADDICT** PEOPLE
- THEY'RE NOT **GAME** DESIGNERS...

PLAYER TYPES

- MY **PLAYER TYPES** THEORY IS INVOKED A LOT FOR GAMIFICATION
- PEOPLE PLAY [VIRTUAL WORLDS] FOR DIFFERENT **REASONS**
 - ACHIEVERS, EXPLORERS, SOCIALISERS, KILLERS
 - CREATE **CONTENT** FOR **ALL FOUR** TYPES
- GAMIFICATION **PROBLEM**: REWARDS HAVE TO BE **APPROPRIATE** FOR THE PLAYER TYPES
- POINTS, LEVELS, BADGES, LEADERBOARDS ETC.
ONLY APPEAL TO **ACHIEVERS!**

FURTHERMORE

- SOCIALISERS DON'T WANT **ACHIEVEMENT** REWARDS, THEY WANT REWARDS THAT LET THEM **SOCIALISE** BETTER
 - WHICH YOU SHOULD GIVE THEM **INTRINSICALLY** FROM THE **START** ANYWAY
- ALSO, PLAYERS **CHANGE TYPE** OVER TIME
 - THE **8-TYPE** MODEL EXPLAINS HOW THIS HAPPENS
- PLAYERS DON'T **STAY** AS ACHIEVERS OR WHATEVER FOREVER – THEY **MOVE ON**

RESULT

- IF **TOO MUCH** GAMIFICATION GOES ON:
 - PEOPLE WILL REALISE THAT **WORTHLESS** EXTRINSIC REWARDS **ARE** WORTHLESS
 - “YAY. ANOTHER BADGE. WHOOPEE”.
 - PEOPLE WILL EVENTUALLY **RECOGNISE** AND **AVOID** EXTRINSIC OPERANT CONDITIONING TROPES
 - “I`M NOT PLAYING **THIS**, IT`S JUST LIKE **THAT**”
 - PEOPLE WILL **MOVE ON** FROM GAMIFICATION – IF THEY WERE EVER **INTO** IT IN THE FIRST PLACE
 - “DO I REALLY **CARE** IF I LOSE THE MAYORSHIP OF MY LOCAL STARBUCKS?”

CONCLUSION

- GAMIFICATION WILL **NOT** BE UBIQUITOUS AFTER FIVE YEARS
 - THE MORE IT **HAPPENS**, THE LESS **EFFECTIVE** IT BECOMES
- **GOOD NEWS FOR GAME DESIGNERS:**
 - NON-GAMERS WILL HAVE BEEN **TRAINED** AND **MAY** WANT TO PLAY SOME ACTUAL **GAMES**
- **ALSO OK NEWS FOR GAMIFIERS**
 - **BEFORE** THIS HAPPENS, THERE'S **POTS** OF MONEY TO BE MADE!