

# **GAMIFICATION: TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?**

**DIGITAL SHOREDITCH**

4<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2011

PROF. RICHARD A. BARTLE

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX

## 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!