

# SUMMARY GAMIFICATION FOR BUSINESS

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# **Summary of “Gamification for Business” by Sune Gudiksen and Jake Inlove**

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Why games are invaluable for entrepreneurs and  
innovators.

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# Introduction

Let's start off with a fun brain-teaser: what do Call of Duty, Monopoly, and UNO all have in common? When you first consider this question, it's obvious that these three things couldn't be more different. One is a video game, one is a board game, and one is a card game. We probably wouldn't consider lumping these three things together as "games" because we understand that each constitutes a very different type of game with very different rules. But they all have one thing in common: people of all ages and all walks of life love to play these games with their friends and family.

Why? Because, quite simply, playing a game is fun. It allows us to reawaken our inner child and return to an age where playing was the primary focus of our life. Playing a game gives us an opportunity to unite with others in the spirit of friendly competition. We get to rest from our work and lose ourselves in fun. We feel free to let our imagination run wild as we strategize, engage, and explore. And that's why the authors argue that we should feel free to do all of those things at work too! Although the concept of "playing" or involving games at work might sound utterly nonsensical, the authors argue that introducing gamification might actually save your company. And over the course of this summary, we're going to learn how that works and why.

# Games are Educational

What was your favorite game as a kid? Maybe you were a big fan of tag or hopscotch or Chutes & Ladders. Maybe you made up your own games with your friends, creating an alternate universe and writing the rules yourself. No matter what game tickled your fancy, a couple of things were universally true: that the game had rules of some sort and that it would be educational. However, that doesn't necessarily mean "educational" in the traditional sense; your games didn't need to involve science, arithmetic, or reading comprehension in order for you to learn something. That's because games have the power to teach us a host of other important life skills. For example, games teach us about following the rules. They teach us what happens if we break them. They teach us about human behavior and how to get along with others. They teach us to imagine, explore, and ask questions.

All of these lessons are crucial to our development as children. They have a profound impact on the people we become. From games, we learn that you are "out" if you violate the rules. We learn that including others is important because it's no fun to sit on the sidelines when you haven't been picked for a team. We learn to think outside the box. We learn to pay attention, to share, to take turns. We learn that everyone is equal in the context of a game. And we carry these lessons with us into the world when we become adults. At the time, we probably had no idea that we were learning so many important lessons. And yet our experience with games played a vital role in molding our personalities, characters, and values. That's why the authors posit that games need to resurface in our lives and in our workplaces. We need to create a safe space in our offices by applying the principles of gamification.

Gamification can best be defined as the act of applying typical elements of game playing (such as point scoring, competition with others, rules of play) to other areas of activity, typically as an online marketing technique to encourage engagement with a product or service. This definition highlights a critical fact: we typically envision gamification in the context of a

marketing scheme that a company might design for prospective customers. For example, the popular coffee chain Dunkin Donuts encourages customers to download an app, make frequent visits, and spend a substantial amount of money in an effort to earn “DD Perks.” DD Perks are points you can earn by purchasing products at any Dunkin Donuts via an app. When you scan the app’s code, you receive points that enable you to eventually earn a free beverage. You need 200 points to earn a free coffee and you get five points for every dollar you spend. So, by the time you finally get to 200, you’ve spent quite a lot of money at Dunkin Donuts in pursuit of that single free drink! But people enjoy earning these points because it’s like a game. And, just like a game, “winning” those points brings them a sense of pride and satisfaction.

So, from a marketing standpoint, “tricking” your customers into playing a game is a great way to increase your revenue. But that’s not quite what the authors are talking about when they think of gamification. So, keep reading, because the next chapter will explore what they really mean and why!

# Gamification in the Workplace

When you think about implementing gamification in the workplace, what do you think that it means? Does it mean that you and your colleagues will be “tricked” into earning points for performing certain tasks? Does it mean that your office will run amok and everyone will play instead of getting their work done? Actually, it doesn’t really mean any of those things! Because that’s not really the type of gaming environment the authors are interested in creating. Instead, they want to rely on a different aspect of the game-playing experience: the part where we all come together on an equal playing field. As we mentioned in the previous chapter, this is one of the core aspects of the game-playing experience that characterized our experience as children.

Because when we all got together to play hopscotch, tag, or UNO, little consideration was given to things like status, ability, gender, or race. Rather than thinking about the things that divide us, we thought about who had the right color of cards or the most creative strategy. We waited patiently for our turn and then encouraged someone else to have a go as well. Those are the principles the authors want to bring back to the workplace. Because creativity and inclusivity are often absent in our offices. Instead, the modern workplace seems to thrive on competition and professionalism, two things that can render us stodgy, static, and sadistic.

Now, that’s not to say that competition and professionalism are inherently bad things; we need both for a company to succeed. But if we only encourage competition, we never give our colleagues a chance to grow and learn from one another. Likewise, professionalism is vitally important for success. But professionalism is often seen as the enemy of fun, playfulness, or creativity. So, when we force employees to be nothing but professional at all times, we’re literally siphoning their sense of humor and creativity. And the authors know that creativity is the secret key to a highly effective workplace. So, that’s one reason why we need to encourage playtime in a professional context! Because when employees feel free to think outside the



box and try new things, they will be happier and more creative and therefore, more effective.

# Finding the Right Game for Your Company

If you've ever hosted a baby shower or a birthday party, you know that choosing the right games for the event is part of the planning process. And the authors argue that the same should be true of your workplace! So, that's why the authors are prepared with a few recommendations of games that will help you succeed. Surprisingly, however, the games on this list aren't the ones you might have played as a kid or even the ones you might now play with friends over a glass of wine. Instead, these games are specially designed to help you address the specific needs and issues of your workplace.

For example, let's say that you want to assess whether your employees' values align with the mission and purpose of your company. After all, a company is only as strong as the people who power it. And if your company's values center on a commitment to excellent customer service, you're unlikely to succeed if your employees don't embody those values in their interactions with your customers. That's where games like Align come in. Align is exactly what it sounds like: it's a game that assesses your employees' values to measure their alignment with your company's mission. Align is formulated by the business consultancy group InContext and they define this game's purpose accordingly:

“Align is the value game that excites your employees to work per the values & principles of your organization. They gain insights in how core values will benefit you and your team in achieving organizational goals. This online game can be customized. Align triggers intense dialogue about your organization's core values. It inspires your employees to work according to the core values. Align offers your employees experience in the behaviors aligned with the core values in a fun way. They learn to apply a combination of the values in challenging daily activities, and experience the impact of non-compliant behavior.”

In practice, this means that your employees have the opportunity to play as a group and simulate real, customizable workplace scenarios. And rather than scoring meaningless points, players are rated on their ability to make morally and ethically sound decisions. They are also scored based on their ability to effectively implement the company's values in a simulation. One of the added benefits of Align is that it doesn't encourage competition or invite your employees to embrace values they don't genuinely share. Rather than classifying players as "winners" or "losers," Align is designed so that everyone works together to achieve the best score for their team.

Similar benefits can be achieved through another game: LinkXs. LinkXs is designed to address another common workplace struggle: the dreaded collaboration of a group project. There's no doubt about it: collaboration is a key element of any healthy business. But it's also one we often loathe. For many of us, this hatred of group projects began as early as elementary school or high school. That's when we quickly learned that some people will do nothing and still expect to get full credit. Some people will be stuck doing all the work and will receive little appreciation or thanks in return. And although it should be exciting to work with other people and acquire the insight of different perspectives, the truth is often far less pleasant. Some people refuse to contribute anything. By contrast, some people believe themselves to be undiscovered geniuses who bless others with their opinion. In truth, however, they sometimes have asinine ideas that hinder the success of the entire project.

As a result, it's no wonder that many people aren't big fans of group projects. But the fact remains that we do need to learn how to work together, so we have to find ways to get along. And that's where LinkXs comes in. Also developed by InContext, the developers describe this game as being an "impactful management game focused on cooperation, support, competition and conflict. LinkXs is all about attitudes and skills and can be played by people of diverse educational or professional levels." They report that "people who play LinkXs often discover that they have deeply rooted beliefs and opinions about cooperation and other issues that have a huge influence on their work, such as communication and leadership. People are

often hardly aware of the forces that influence these issues in their lives and they are therefore hardly ever discussed. LinkXs provides a framework for analyzing team cooperation in a thorough and versatile way and enables the clearing of any blockages, should this be found to be necessary.”

As you can see, games like LinkXs are great because they invite players to explore their core feelings about themselves and their relationship with collaborative tasks in the context of a game. By turning an ordinary task into a game, players have the opportunity to think outside the box and develop new approaches and attitudes toward collaboration. And best of all: neither Align nor LinkXs are unfairly biased in any one direction. Both games target your high-performing employees and your slackers with equal fairness and attention. This means that the games have the power to offer tips for the person who does all the work in group projects and the person who takes credit for doing nothing. Both games give each type of employee a fair chance to analyze and evaluate their attitudes and habits. As a result, underperforming employees have a chance to acknowledge their faults and seek helpful resources. Similarly, if they decline to improve, you know who isn't a good fit for your company and you can prune the deadweight from your team.

Who would have guessed that so many benefits could come from simply playing a game at work?

## Final Summary

If someone suggested, “You should play games at work!” you might think they were crazy. Aside from the occasional video game with a friend or card game over drinks, most of us assume that we left games behind in elementary school. However, the authors posit that games can actually help us to unlock and implement our full potential in the workplace. And that’s exactly why the modern office needs the benefits of gamification.

By implementing the core principles of games-- creativity, inclusivity, and a playful spirit-- we can reclaim the innovative and creative spirits we often check at the door of our offices. We can think outside the box and approach our co-workers on a level playing field, uninhibited by the divisions that commonly separate us in adult life. And if we implement a few games that are designed to optimize company culture and creativity, we can maximize our true potential as individuals and as a team.



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