

The Ultimate Guide to Event Gamification

EVENT LEADERBOARD



PLAYER
80,000



PLAYER
100,000



PLAYER
70,000

4th



PLAYER 60,000

6th



PLAYER 22,500

5th



PLAYER 40,000

7th



PLAYER 12,750

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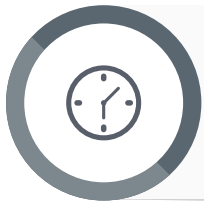
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INTRO & OVERVIEW

Gamification: Level 1

Games are more prevalent than ever before. From popular online games with their own communities to mobile games with unprecedented adoption, every generation is more engaged in games than the last. Businesses are quickly catching on to the attention and engagement games command.

Event gamification is the use of game mechanics to engage attendees, modify participant behavior, and accomplish event goals. These age-old game dynamics have been strategically implemented to create competition, drive desired behaviors, and engage players in solving real world problems. Starbucks Rewards, Air Miles and Marriott Rewards are all examples of how companies use gamification to increase customer retention. That it has taken this long to uncover its application with respect to events shouldn't undercut the fact that good game design drives action. What those actions are depends on your objectives, which hinge on the makeup of your event, and that's why we're going to explore gamification in events.

Gamification is not about turning your event into a competition or a video game. It's a strategy that applies game mechanics, dynamics, and design (.g. leaderboards, time constraints, and rules of play) to amplify the ultimate attendee experience and achieve your objectives.

Gamification taps into some powerful core drives of human behavior: desires and needs that revolve around status, achievement, and rewards.



"Gamification is the use of game design elements in non-game contexts."

—Sebastian Deterding

INTRO & OVERVIEW

Benefits of Gamification

It's important to remember that simply activating these core drives is not enough. First, you need to define your target audience in order to align their needs and expectations with the objectives of your event. With your objectives aligned, you can strategically implement gamification to best fit with your attendees' attention spans and keep them in the flow of your event, aiding in their success and allowing you to accurately measure the success of your event.

Once your target audience has been defined, you can identify which behaviors they're familiar with, and which should be encouraged to best satisfy your event objectives. Gamification allows you to focus the attention and motivation of participants to achieve event goals and reinforce social unity. In this way, you can design your game to encourage attendees to prioritize and perform tasks you value.

For example, add bonus points for early registration to increase attendance, create group tasks to bolster networking, or drive movement around the event grounds by using a Scavenger Hunt to turn the event experience into more of a narrative. Gamifying your event will motivate observers to get into the flow of your event and participate. By sitting in the driver's seat of engagement, you also have the ability to measure success and make changes accordingly, creating a cycle of testing, measuring, and adjusting.

Gabe Zichermann, CEO of Gamification Co. and chair of GSummit (an annual conference focused on gamification) is one of the leading minds in the field of game design, he gives us keen insight into why we should play games. Confronting challenges and overcoming them increases our 'fluid intelligence,' which is the ability to solve problems that we've never come across before. Engendering this ability to be innovative in the moment is what will give you, your company, and your event the competitive advantage by improving its perceived value.



"Playing games increases our 'fluid intelligence,' which is the ability to solve problems that we've never come across before."
—Gabe Zichermann

Why We Play Games



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Why We Play Games



TIPS AND GAMIFICATION INSPIRATION

*Inject one of Gabe's core drives into your next game by **adding constraints like time-based challenges** to your networking game or requiring scavenger hunt challenges be completed in a particular order.*

MECHANICS, DYNAMICS & EMOTIONS IN GAMES

Four Game Drives

There is a lot of discussion about the elements of gaming and how they motivate us to play and participate. It can be difficult to wrangle the different schools of thought into a cohesive list of actionable elements that will help us design games to achieve our particular business objectives. Karen Robson, an associated professor at York University, created a framework to understand how these elements work together. She outlines a motivational triad of mechanics, dynamics, and emotions that she calls the MDE framework. She describes an interdependent relationship between these elements:

“Mechanics form the structure that the gamified experience exists in; however, on their own, mechanics are not enough to create an experience that will motivate behavior or changes. Emerging from this structure, both dynamics and emotions animate the experience and are key dimensions in creating the desired behavior change.”

FOUR DRIVES THAT MAKE YOU HAPPIER

The practical benefits of using games are quickly catching on, and the momentum is increasing as more research goes into gamification and the underlying game mechanics are identified. Gabe Zichermann contributes to the study of these game mechanics in his TEDTalk entitled The Future of Innovation and Creativity is Gamification. He focuses on four key game elements that push us to play games. The four elements Zichermann outlines create a framework for stimulating and facilitating creativity:

- **Constraint** The drive to master the environment through creativity.
- **Perseverance and Grit** The drive to push through and keep going.
- **Discovering True Talent and Skill** The desire to improve oneself.
- **Speed and Pressure** The desire to be decisive and the pleasure from making fast decisions.

Why We Play Games



TIPS AND GAMIFICATION INSPIRATION

You could use Jane McGonigal's Massively Multiplayer Thumb War as an icebreaker and weave an emotional connection between your attendees in a matter of seconds.

MECHANICS, DYNAMICS & EMOTIONS IN GAMES

See the Drives in Action

Injecting one or more of these game elements into your game design will improve your attendee experience by keeping them engaged. For example, awarding those who make the most connections before a certain time in your networking game can help your participants get the most out of your session.

Jane McGonigal, a world-renowned game designer, author, and presenter on gamification, incorporates these drives flawlessly in her demonstration of Massively Multiplayer Thumb War (MMTW). She applies Zichermann's core drives to the age-old feat of strength, to maximize the constraints, difficulty, and thus the reward. In her version, you need to connect multiple hands (3 or more) in the center — the thumb war — and the first person to pin someone else is the winner. The potential for expansion is part of what makes MMTW so powerful — using both hands to start multiple games, connecting a web of thumb wars. Having more thumbs in more wars literally and figuratively brings people closer together. This heightened competition boasts the ability to evoke 10 positive emotions in one minute, drawing joy, relief, love, surprise, pride, curiosity, excitement, contentment, creativity, awe and wonder in a matter of seconds.



MMTW wove social unity amongst players in a simple, quick, fun and free way. By suddenly prompting a room full of people to jump into a game in which they had to link multiple hands presented a logistical challenge that needed to be solved immediately. Snap decisions about which hands to grab hold of, quick assessments of your neighbors, and then trying your hand at the modified thumb war all serve to stimulate the core drives in Zichermann's framework.

Why We Play Games



TIPS AND GAMIFICATION INSPIRATION

Displaying the leaderboard publicly will utilize the influence/status and progression dynamics.

MECHANICS, DYNAMICS & EMOTIONS IN GAMES

Four Game Dynamics

Seth Priebatsch is the founder of the SCVNGR and LevelUp social gaming sites. During his TEDTalk Building a Game Layer on Top of the World, he posits that the previous decade saw an increase in social connections facilitated by massive social networks like Twitter and Facebook. He forecasts that in the next decade we will see gamification and the way we design games use our social connections, dynamics, and intrinsic and extrinsic forces to influence where we go, why we go there and what we're doing there. Priebatsch continues to define and give examples of four game dynamics. These dynamics employ Zichermann's core drives, creating an actionable context by translating them into behavioral tendencies you can incorporate into your game design.

- **Appointment Dynamic** A dynamic in which, to succeed, you must return to a predefined place at a predefined time to make a predetermined action. (e.g. Create challenges that require punctuality or time management. Happy hour at bars use this dynamic, and Farmville has gained more active users than Twitter by using time-specific challenges.)
- **Influence and Status Dynamic** The ability of one player to modify another's actions through social pressure. (e.g. Use leaderboards, trophies and prizes to let people rank themselves and give top performers some distinction, creating a friendly, competitive atmosphere. Exclusive credit cards, or more conventionally, the grading system in schools is a perfect example of this.)
- **Progression Dynamic** Success is measured and quantified through the process of completing itemized tasks. Displaying progress granularly will ensure that players are always moving up and on to the next challenge or objective. (e.g. Set milestones to mark partial and total completion of challenges, like LinkedIn's percentage-based progress bar to let you know how complete your profile is.)
- **Communal Discovery** The dynamic wherein an entire community is rallied to work together to solve problems or challenges. (e.g. Tracking shared networking goals and upvoting questions during Q&A sessions use this dynamic. Digg News uses this dynamic to crowdsource the most important news.)

These game dynamics speak to some of the most basic game design elements that can be implemented in sessions at your event to amplify and enhance the attendee experience and drive actions that produce results.

Why We Play Games



TIPS AND GAMIFICATION INSPIRATION

Acquire some currency in the “economy of engagement.” Drive foot traffic to the different exhibitor and sponsorship booths by creating a check-in game.

MECHANICS, DYNAMICS & EMOTIONS IN GAMES

Four Game Dynamics

TURN OBSERVERS INTO ENGAGERS

After studying and teaching gamification for over a decade, and then writing a couple books on it, Jane McGonigal has drawn some important conclusions. One of which is that organizations will need to become effective players in what she calls the “economy of engagement.” It will be less and less important to compete for attention, and more and more important to compete for things like collaboration and “interactive or participation bandwidth.” The bandwidth describes a relationship between the activity’s perceived value and the mental real estate the participant is willing to invest.

McGonigal uses Cambrian House’s downfall to highlight this point. Cambrian House had a solid start, with almost \$8 million invested and a clear goal “to harness wisdom and participation of online crowds to filter, build, and commercialize software ideas and businesses.” A mere two years later, they went bankrupt despite positive press, 50,000 members, 7,096 ideas for new software, and averaging 15,000 visitors per month. But how? How could something appear so successful and yet fail dismally? The major problem, McGonigal observes, was that most members preferred to simply view or rate the ideas rather than participating in the intended process of collaboration. Cambrian House’s inability to convert the crowd’s uninvolved attention into substantial engagement illustrates the challenge companies and events are facing –to innovate new ways to harness the participation of the people.

Why We Play Games



TIPS AND GAMIFICATION INSPIRATION

Building a story with your Scavenger Hunt game enlists all four key drives McGonigal outlines that push people to be the best version of themselves during a game.

MECHANICS, DYNAMICS & EMOTIONS IN GAMES

Actions that Elicit Emotions

You may have no problem with getting people to attend your event, but you can't force them to participate or submit useful feedback. So how do you turn passive observers into active engagers? This challenge will lead corporations and associations alike to take cues from the world of games rather than the world of business. "The economy of engagement is also an economy of feelings, in which positive emotions – pride, curiosity, love, and feeling smart – are the ultimate reward for participation." She continues to outline four emotions that emerge while we play and drive us to be the best version of ourselves:

- **Urgent Optimism** Self-motivation and sense of urgency when confronted with a challenge.
- **Social Fabric** We like people more after we play a game with them.
- **Blissful Productivity** People are happier working hard and feeling accomplished.
- **Epic Meaning** Being part of something bigger, such as a strong narrative or story.

The intrinsic motivational power of positive emotions elicited from gameplay is an important part of gamification. Jane McGonigal is an advocate for using digital gaming technology to channel positive attitudes and collaboration to solve real-world problems, like poverty, disease, global warming, and hunger. Out of personal necessity, she developed SuperBetter after suffering a concussion that didn't heal properly. She turned her recovery into a game. It's designed to fight ailments like social anxiety, weight problems, brain injuries, depression and so much more. She created a framework for recovery that assigns point values to challenges that target every instance of recovery as well as challenges to avoid activities that will aggravate the condition.

Why We Play Games



TIPS AND GAMIFICATION INSPIRATION

*A combination of **staggering prizes**, challenge difficulty and consistently **displaying leaderboards** to increase competition can create a **flow** to your game.*

MECHANICS, DYNAMICS & EMOTIONS IN GAMES

Actions that Elicit Emotions

The objective is to build resilience, willpower, mental strength, optimism, determination, courage, and motivation. The game enlists friends, family and communities that are already a part of your life to create and reinforce heroic qualities. Whatever you may be struggling with, you can customize the challenges and obstacles to best fit your lifestyle and needs. By tracking physical, mental, emotional and social resilience, SuperBetter helps you get stronger and improve. By identifying the motivational aspects of the games she loved to play, Jane was able to use point allotments and a levelling principle to push herself towards the win, and the win condition was a full recovery.

FLOW AT YOUR EVENT

This framework of mechanics, dynamics and emotions work towards creating a sense of flow at your event. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes the psychological notion of flow as a positive emotional state in which the person is immersed in an activity with intense focus and creative engagement. Flow is an excellent factor to keep in mind when executing your game design. If your participants are caught up in the flow of your game, the rewards, challenges and content will seamlessly engage and deliver the unexpected value every event planner seeks to impart on their guests.

Turning observers into engagers and attendees into participants at your event has a huge impact on their overall experience and your ability to gauge your event's success. A direct channel to the rest of the world in the palm of every attendee's hand means you're competing against a myriad of distractions and that's where gamification comes into play.

Successfully Applying Gamification



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SMART Objective Framework


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61% of CEOs, CFOs and senior executives take daily game breaks at work.

OBJECTIVES INFORM STRATEGY

Define Your Goals

What are the key business objectives of your event? Clearly define your objectives and goals in tandem with your audience profile and their objectives before you design your game. This will help you build your game more effectively and help you accurately measure how you achieved objectives through your game and ultimately your event. Each event's objectives will be different; asking yourself tough questions about your event should give you insight into specific objectives you can support with your game.

- *Who's your target audience? Who else might be interested or want to get involved?*
- *What do you want to accomplish with your event? (Do you want to build your brand? Customer relationships? Media relationships? Is it a product launch? Do you want to generate sales or sponsorship?)*
- *What's the timeline of your event?*

SMART Objective Framework


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*A SMART objective
might look like:*

***Increase the number of
networking opportunities
for attendees by 25% at
the Sales Conference in
January.***

OBJECTIVES INFORM STRATEGY

Refined Goals

The next step is fitting the objectives that arise from these questions into the SMART guideline. Defining your objectives according to this guideline will help you target your objectives effectively as well as measure your success accurately:

<u>Goal</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>Becomes</u>
<u>S</u> pecific	Build media relationships	Build media relationships with bloggers a, b, c, and local T.V. stations (X) and (Y) that cover events like yours.
<u>M</u> easurable	Generate sales	Generate (X) amount of new leads, convert (Y) amount of existing leads, sell (Z) amount of product.
<u>A</u> ctionable	Product launch	(X) amount of prototypes on the floor, setting up feedback systems, as well as having design break-downs and demos.
<u>R</u> easonable	Gain sponsors	Qualify and then begin talks with potential sponsors, gather connections and develop existing partnerships or sponsorships leads.
<u>T</u> ime Sensitive	Build customer relationships	Get positive feedback from 10 new customers by the end of the event.

SMART Objective Framework


TIPS AND GAMIFICATION
INSPIRATION

*Social actions **change** depending on the **collection** of communities attending your event.*

OBJECTIVES INFORM STRATEGY

Turn Objectives Into Actions

Once you've defined the target and your SMART objectives, outlining what actions you want them to actually take at your event and in the game is the next step. This can be accomplished by using a 'social action exercise,' in which you rank the top five actions you want your players to take. Boiling down the actions can help build your game's framework, but be sure to avoid using verbs that indicate a hard sell, like "buy" or "consume." Common player verbs to choose from include but aren't limited to:

- Advocate → Discuss → Comment
- Compare → Compete → Connect
- Explore → Network → View
- Give → Help → Join
- Like → Share → Tweet → Post
- Rate → Learn → Recommend

Rewarding Games



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Rewarding Games


TIPS AND GAMIFICATION
INSPIRATION

While material objects are the most common type of reward, beware! The moment the stuff has been awarded is the moment the player stops being engaged unless you've clearly indicated there are more prizes to be won.

INCENTIVES GET PEOPLE PLAYING

Set the Right Incentives

Now that you've identified and aligned your objectives with your attendee's actions, you can set up appropriate systems of rewards that compliment and reinforce intrinsic motivations. One such system is the SAPS (Status, Access, Power, Stuff). This list not only orders potential prizes from most to least desired, but also cheapest to most expensive.

- [Status](#) This refers to positioning individuals within their social group in a defined ranking system using badges and/or leaderboards. This reward is entirely contingent on being publicly visible to other players in the game.
- [Access](#) While intimately associated with status, access refers to admittance to exclusive offers, such as lunch with a speaker, VIP seating, or a post-event party.
- [Power](#) Again, though intimately associated with status, power can be awarded independently. Power can refer to the control of one player over the others, or self-improvement gleaned from new skills or knowledge. Offering the top players on the leaderboard first dibs during question period or preferred session choices is an example of power.
- [Stuff](#) Otherwise known as collateral, stuff is a purely extrinsic reward. Its being extrinsic can work both in its favor and against itself. Stuff can be a strong incentive but it largely depends on the perceived value to the players and to the player's community. Stuff's motivation is also limited to the point in time of acquisition.

Rewarding Games


TIPS AND GAMIFICATION
INSPIRATION

*Staggering challenges and rewards throughout the day allows you to deliver **fresh and novel opportunities** to engage with the game. Having a new game every day is also a great way to refresh interest with new challenges, rules and rewards to compete for.*

INCENTIVES GET PEOPLE PLAYING

Spell Out & Stagger Incentives

While you're setting up your rewards system, keep in mind that prizes should be proportionate to the effort it takes to win them. You don't want to give away prizes all day, but conversely, you don't want players to be frustrated with the difficulty. Bolster the trusted line of communication you have built with your attendees by clearly describing how to win the awards and what the awards are exactly. Do you win golf clubs by being the first to complete all the challenges? Will everyone in the top 5 spots on the leaderboard be entered into a raffle? Whatever the prize and the challenge, just remember to be clear.

Another best practice is to balance short term and long term gains to garner and encourage players to play the game all the way through and keep their interest peaked. Technology has improved the system of rewards by providing instant gratification, challenge-by-challenge, rather than participants getting results post-event. The implementation guides that follow this eBook will further outline these procedures and walk you through how to implement rewards effectively.

Ready. Aim. Game.



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Ready. Aim. Game.



TIPS AND GAMIFICATION INSPIRATION

*In your game, **one action** resulting in a **single outcome** will keep your players moving along, reduce frustration and keep the competition close.*

YOUR NEXT STEPS

Time to Get Started

Even though this process of gamification leads you to develop a complex, comprehensive strategy, when it comes to building your game, the simpler the better. Seriously think about what's appropriate and realistic for your event, your attendees, and your staff. You want your game to be a challenge to keep players intrigued but making sure it's an achievable challenge will ensure participant's gratification.

Now that you've had an introduction to gamification, building your strategy around your objectives and then executing that strategy with the appropriate event technology is well within your grasp. To help you through the rest of this process we've included a series of implementation guides for you to use free of charge, no strings attached.

Learning—Doing—Succeeding— EventMobi's got you covered every step of the way.



Create Unforgettable Event Experiences with EventMobi

We'd love to hear about your events program and help you create unforgettable experiences. Get in touch with the EventMobi team today and we'll walk you through pricing, answer your questions, and set you up with a free demo.

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About EventMobi

EventMobi makes it easy for event organizers to plan, promote, monetize, and deliver engaging in-person, virtual & hybrid event experiences. From Event Websites and Registration, to an award-winning Mobile Event App, Virtual & Hybrid Event Platform, and a complete range of support and production services, EventMobi's Event Management Platform has been trusted by planners since 2009 at 30,000+ global events.