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GAMIFICATION AS A TECHNOLOGY OF TALENT MANAGEMENT



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Abstract. The article presents and illustrates the People Equity framework that serves as a global bridge between important individual and business outcomes such as turnover, financial performance, quality, productivity, customer retention and organizational processes and policies. The article presents the ease of management using gamification in it. First of all, the essence of gamification and talent management systems in human resource management is explained. The author then has found how gamification can help with talent management. By studying the perception of gamification by employees in various companies, information about which was found in the database, the contexts of the gamification use were revealed. The study showed that gamification is used by companies not only for attracting talents and their training, but also for career development, safety, health and well-being, as well as for team building. The results imply that gamification can have a substantially positive effect on intrinsic need satisfaction for services users.

Keywords: Human Resource Management; Talent Management; Gamification; People Equity; Games; Design thinking.

JEL codes: M 59; M 14.

Introduction

The term 'talent management' and 'gamification' has been around for quite some time, but definitions abound around the globe, applications are varied, and a plethora of measures most tactical are currently being used. Talent Management is a relatively new niche inside the branch of Human Resource Management. Talent management is a key succession planning tool that provides an integrated means of identifying, selecting, developing and retaining top talent within our organization. Think of talent management as a business strategy that will help you retain exceptional employees.

Gamification is increasingly used as an essential part of today's services, software and systems to engage and motivate users, as well as to spark further behaviors. Gamification is the use of game mechanics and experience design to digitally engage and motivate people to achieve their goals. This article addresses how the concept of gamification in talent management is of both theoretical and practical value. More specifically, I address these questions: What is Talent Management? What is Gamification? How gamification will be useful in Talent Management?

1. What is Talent Management? And what is Gamification?

Before tackling talent management, it is imperative to define "talent". Definitions of talent abound. Ulrich proposed that it equates to the combination of 'competence, commitment and contribution' (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). McKinsey & Company defined 'talent' as 'the sum of a person's abilities . . . his or her intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgment, attitude, character and drive. It also includes his or her ability to learn and grow' (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001, p. xii). For purposes of this paper, I define talent as the skills, abilities, experiences, values, habits, collective knowledge, and behaviours of all labor that is brought to bear on the organization's mission. Talent management is a unique function that integrates all of the activities and responsibilities associated with the management of the talent lifecycle regardless of geography from attracting and acquiring talent to developing and retaining it. Talent management can be defined as a mission critical process that ensures organizations have the quantity and quality of people in place to meet their current and future business priorities. The process covers all key aspects of an employee's "life cycle:" selection, development, succession and performance management. One of the examples of talent management is that hiring for the right skills is more efficient than developing those skills. What about the areas that are developable, like interpersonal skills, decision-making, or technical skills? Assessing those areas at the time of hire is likely to cost less than developing them later.

During recent decades, we have witnessed glimpses of a fascinating emerging development where utilitarian and hedonic systems are in a state of spiralling convergence. Today, the spiral has made a full revolution, and we now see hedonic or entertainment-oriented technologies being re-appropriated for productive use. This development has been titled "gamification" and the phenomenon has quickly cemented itself as being one of the major developments in the information systems (IS) field and other domains. Hedonic information systems initially came about through the re-appropriation of instrumental information technology. Most notably, the first video games emerged from a playful re-appropriation of oscilloscopes – a seemingly utilitarian system ("Tennis for Two" developed by Higinbotham in 1958 – see e.g. Tavinor, 2009). Since then, we have witnessed

a wide diffusion of game consoles (e.g. Pong in 1972, Atari 2600 in 1977, Nintendo in 1983, Xbox in 2002 etc.) and other video game applications. As people live, work, and act in increasingly digital environments, human resource managers need to adapt recruiting and employer branding tools accordingly (Ryan & Wessel, 2015; Stone & Deadrick, 2015; Wong, Giessner, van Ballen, & Roufanis, 2017). In the digitized economy, not only work processes and tasks increasingly shift to a digital context, but also the workforce becomes more digitally native (Wong & Fieseler, 2018). This “digitized” workforce expects digital prowess of organizations as well as free access to company information (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012). For companies, such expectations lead to the question how to attract, motivate, and retain staff via suitable (digital) tools that match these requirements. The literature on gamification is rapidly increasing and spreading in many directions, but this is similar to any development that has great potential and which is surrounded by a crowd of hyped enthusiasts. In order to control and take advantage of this development, concerted efforts are needed to harness the literature and existing knowledge to productive use, and to provide the field with an agenda for further research. As the global business community grows, many business organizations are discovering and embracing the use of the concepts of gamification to market their products. Basically, gamification is the use of strategic game designs and mechanics to motivate the interested parties to achieve their objectives. Example of excellent use of gamification in business context is Starbucks is known for its care when it comes to customer and employee loyalty and engagement. My Starbucks Rewards is an example of such a technique, where gamification serves to transform a traditional card loyalty program into something much more complex. After registering, clients gain stars with every purchase, which can later be exchanged for free drinks and food.

How gamification will be useful in Talent Management?

Gamification is fast gaining a lot of attention in the corporate world today. Gamification has excellent use in Talent Management such as in the hiring process can help companies enhance prospective recruits’ experience by rewarding them for completing steps and providing them an insight to the company’s culture and values. Altogether you’re giving them a preview of what to expect as an employee of the company and significantly increasing your chances of hiring the ‘right’ talent. You could even say that while you’re sifting through the talent pool to attract the most skilled and competent talent, you’re orienting them with your culture (an offshoot of on-boarding) (Bukharina, 2017). This way you’re enhancing your chances of hiring candidates that are well aligned with your environment and reducing turnover of new recruits. There are many companies out there such as Ford, Google, Disneyland, Microsoft, Cisco, Deloitte, and many more that have used gamification to boost business performance in the companies. Most companies are looking for innovative ways to incorporate methods in which employees feel more motivated to work harder and

create a drive towards higher employee engagement. An example of how gamification is used is how Cisco has incorporated this method within their workplace by creating learning networks in order for their employees to learn different subjects, take quizzes, and earn certifications when finished learning the specific subject areas. This method has been proven to help Cisco motivate and create a higher learning environment for their employees. The objective that large companies are looking to get out of gamification is the impact that it takes through motivational techniques that are similarity entrenched in gaming methods. By using game mechanics, and design in talent management, it can create long-lasting impacts towards learning methods such as career development, safety, health and wellness, and team building. Another huge upside is that due to having access to computers and mobile phones, there are many benefits of gamification through tools employees use every day, creating a lot of opportunities for extrinsic/intrinsic rewards. There are many different focus points that companies can use to target gamification such as learning and development, improving ROI, teamwork, HR, creativity, and culture.

Gamification has proven to be a success for a lot of these large companies that I have mentioned in this article, which has instilled to be a great anecdote for talent management. There are many ways implementing gamification within the workplace can positively improve recruitment today.

2. Methods

Research Philosophy: Before the details of the research design are explained, Saunders et al. (2009) suggest that you start by clarifying the metatheoretical assumptions regarding “the relationship between [the nature of that] knowledge and the process by which it is developed” (p.108). In our research we are departing from the social constructionist, interpretivist epistemological position in order to arrive at an answer to our two research questions: What is talent management and gamification? And How gamification will be useful in Talent Management? Based on these questions, we also thought it to be important to take a more critical orientated approach when we interpreted our data.

The role of theory: Our social constructivist, interpretivist frame of reference is reflected in the design of our research process. The practices we employ emphasize the importance we give to understanding different employee perspectives in the context of the circumstances of their personal and professional lives. This has implications for the way we analyse and give meaning to our data (Ritchie et al., 2014, Travers, 2001). At the start of our research we used existing literature and research to provide us with a basic understanding of our research topic. This was also done in order for us to map out our research study in terms of design and sampling approach.

Research Choice and Research Strategy: In view of our ontological paradigm described as relativist, epistemological position described as social constructivist, interpretivist, and the nature of our research problem, the choice of qualitative research seemed fitting. As studies on the use of gamification in talent management are scarce, we excluded quantitative research from our considerations as it employs measurement of data through numbers and other means of quantification (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and we were more interested in how it is perceived in order to find out how it works. Perception as such has been defined by different dictionaries such as Merriam-Webster (2016) as a “way you think about or understand someone or something” (n.p.).

Data collection: Following our aforementioned research philosophy and the exploratory nature of this research, we hoped to reveal relevant contexts primarily through the research papers and database. Furthermore, we gathered information through the documents.

Data Analysis: After collecting data, it should be analysed properly for better results.

3. Results

Some of the live results using gamification in talent management are as follows:

1. Organise a Recruitathon. LINKEDIN worked with Flipkart in India to organise their first Recruiting Hackathon: a fun way of getting teams together on a challenging project, chasing critical hard to fill open positions in record time. They scored 226 candidates in less than 5 hours.

2. Phoenix Software locks candidates for one hour in an escape room, together with employees of the company, to get to know them and to select the right candidates for the job. Candidates don't have to send a cv, but just need to register for this activity.

3. Candidates can game their way into your company. The US Air Force has created the Airman Challenge game to teach prospective recruits more about the Air Force and its available positions. Or use in-game job recruitment. Uncle Grey (a Danish agency) used online gaming to recruit front-end developers. After researching where its potential candidates were spending time, they arranged a 'sponsorship' deal with players of Team Fortress 2, who placed posters inside the game mentioning the job and linking to an URL.

4. NTT uses an internal game called 'Samurai' to test leadership qualities. After answering a range of questions, the participants join a quest to show how good they are at managing others. The game helps NTT to find the good leaders within the company and gives insights on who needs more help in which area.

5. My Marriott Hotel is a game that has been developed by Marriott International to recruit newbies. It allows the candidates to run their own virtual hotel in which they design their own restaurant, purchase inventory, train employees and serve guests. It virtually simulates the whole

experience to run a hotel business. Points are being awarded according to the customer service the players provide. They can also win points for every satisfied customer and they lose points for poor customer service. Technically this is a business game or simulation, which differs a bit from gamification. With gamification, you apply gaming elements in your work and activities. With HR-business games, you simulate an environment to test or train employees. But since it's often part of a larger process, we still consider it can be part of a gamification strategy.

In such a way gamification can be very powerful in talent management and can be used to gamify the whole employee experience but it doesn't always work or at least it doesn't just work by itself. It needs qualitative input. When your training material is bad, gamification won't make it better. It also needs time and energy. It's not a one-time set-up and then everything is done. You need to bring in the time and resources to monitor results, evaluate and adapt accordingly.

Conclusion

Gamifying employer branding activities via serious games represents a novel way of building employer brand knowledge for an increasingly digitized workforce, which requires new HRM tools (Stone & Deadrick, 2015; Stone, Deadrick, Lukaszewski, & Johnson, 2015). This workforce expects digital prowess of as well as free access to information about organizations and is especially attracted to digital activities such as digital games. Thus, companies face the challenge how to design their HRM accordingly in order to attract, motivate, and retain members of this workforce. We believe that gamifying companies' employer branding via serious games can be a promising tool, particularly, as it meets the needs of a digitized workforce. Both employer branding and serious games (Uskov & Sekar, 2014) share the important goal of inducing a learning process.

Gamification has increasingly been used as an essential part of today's services, software and systems to engage and motivate users, as well as to spark further behaviors. So, by using gamification in talent management things will be easy and more interesting to do.

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