



What Can Fill Your Booth & Motivate Your Prospects? Gamification.

BY AUTHOR MICHAEL HAMILTON – PRINCIPAL - GETSYNCHRONICITY

Q: How can I make my booth a real “destination” on the show floor and generate tons of positive word-of-mouth?

A: Two words ... Try Gamification.

... the common denominator is ... motivating people to take part and rewarding them for doing so.

Games and contests have been used to attract customers ever since the first corner store offered a bottle of hair tonic for guessing the number of pennies in a jar.

Companies throughout the 20th century rewarded consumers for their winning essays about the wonders of their products (“Homemakers, tell us what Lux soap means to your family!”). And not so long ago exhibitors tossed T-shirts to those tradeshow attendees who most loudly shouted the answers to brand-boosting quiz questions.

Business-sponsored games and challenges are no less popular today. This article will provide a brief overview of how strategic and valuable they’ve become for exhibitors and meeting producers, and how helpful they’ve become for customers. For a deeper dive, check out our full White Paper ... [Gamification: Winning the Engagement Challenge at Tradeshows and Events.](#)

Evolution. Yesterday’s booth bingo has given way to gamification, a term applied to any activity that strategically uses a game, or elements of a game, to engage others toward goals that go beyond mere winning.

Those goals could include educating people, encouraging teamwork, solving problems, or changing behavior. Whether the methodology is low- or high-tech, solo- or group-oriented, the common denominator is engagement — motivating people to take part and rewarding them for doing so.

Why Play? The question driving the core psychology of gamification is: What motivates people to play? There is no single answer, of course, nor is there a simple one. Each customer demographic will possess its characteristic motivation drivers even as a percentage of the group departs from the profile.

The greater the understanding of the demographic, however, the greater the ability to know what is important to them and what motivates them. Such information is fundamental to a truly engaging game design.

The primary motivation mechanisms driving engagement in games include:

- **Competition:** How can I do better than my peers?
- **Mastery:** How good can I get at this?
- **Learning:** How can I increase my knowledge?
- **Achievement:** How will it feel to add this to my wins?
- **Status:** How good will winning make me look?
- **Sociability:** How can I connect more closely with my team?
- **Altruism:** How can I contribute to the social good?

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The best-designed games trigger more than one of these motive appeals. A game that was designed for Ferring Pharmaceutical, for example, touched multiple motivations of its audience of medical professionals. At a tradeshow in Las Vegas, the company used a poker-inspired game to educate participants about its products and procedures.

Using touchscreen technology, the game started each player with a stack of poker chips and then dealt three playing cards for every new question in the quiz. Participants chose a response by dragging and dropping chips from their stack onto the card they felt was the correct answer.

Correct answers increased a player's stack of chips; incorrect answers resulted in a loss of chips. Each player was asked five questions and had the option to play multiple times to improve his or her score (questions changed from game to game). Throughout the activity, the participants learned new information on how to perform colonoscopies more effectively. The highest-scoring players received recognition from leader boards that towered over the booth. And, in the spirit of cause marketing, money matching the amount of the winning chips was donated to the Colonoscopy Association, a nonprofit close to the hearts of the attendees.

10 Benefits of Gamification. Game formats at tradeshows or meetings offer businesses 10 important wins:

1. **Flexibility.** Games can be designed from scratch or repurposed from existing formats to deliver customized messages.
2. **Visibility.** Game environments attract attention, increasing participation. Signage that advertises incentives and leader boards that track player progress can act as beacons to passersby and heighten the excitement.

Gamification will soon be the assumption rather than the exception.

3. **Sociability.** Games have a friendly vibe (a perception that can extend to the company sponsoring them). They provide instant icebreakers between staff and prospects, or between attendees at conferences, making approaching and being approached easier and more enjoyable.
4. **Enjoyment.** From TV game shows and smartphone Solitaire to World of Warcraft and Candy Crush, people know and love games. Games elicit positive emotional states. And a booth with attendees in high spirits can be contagious.
5. **Reward.** Whether the prize is a bar of chocolate, a trip to The Bahamas, a virtual trophy, a nonprofit donation, or recognition of a job well done, games evoke the yearning to win. If the right motivational mechanism is struck, people will play.
6. **Immersion.** Games provide a single point of focus that demands complete attention if the player is to succeed. Arguably no other messaging tool requires—and gets—as high a degree of concentration from the target audience.
7. **Retention.** Games can accelerate learning by simultaneously stimulating the visual, aural, and tactile senses. With more neurons firing, the brain retains more of the experience and the information embedded within it. When the prospect wins the game, the “win” comes with an understanding of the business message that, in the best cases, will have value for them.
8. **Transition.** Qualified prospects who learn about the brand or products through the game are primed for more-targeted discussions with booth reps. From the game environment it may be just a few steps to demo stations or private meeting areas, where the discovery process can further develop.
9. **Buzz.** At tradeshow and meetings alike, a great game gets word of mouth. The more people that talk, tweet, photograph, and post social media about it, the greater the exposure for the company. Games can also increase the amount of time people spend in the booth, which provides more opportunities for staff to interact with them and build relationships.
10. **Continuity.** Some games, especially those with educational objectives, can be designed for use beyond the meeting or tradeshow. They can become effective sales tools in the field or online.

Conclusion. Gamification offers a powerful engagement tool wherever people are motivated by the spirit of play, the lure of competition, or the desire to learn, excel, explore, give back, or come together as a team or community.

Given the sea changes brought on, almost regularly now, by the Digital Age, we seem to be rapidly approaching a time when gamification will have integrated so completely into the culture that it has become the assumption rather than the exception.