



Chief Gaming Officer? Not So Crazy Any More!

Siddhesh Bhobe, Associate Vice President, Persistent Systems Ltd. & CEO, eMee

Online games are no longer the purview of the select few. This is the “Like Me” generation. Social networks like Facebook have developed in all of us the need to be constantly applauded and appreciated. It’s changed the way we share, communicate, collaborate, create, recommend, buy or sell. Gaming has changed how the modern man perceives motivation and happiness. It is now normal to see a dad fight with his son for a higher position on the racing game leaderboard!

Things are also changing drastically in our work environments. Most businesses today recognize that social networking and gaming for their employees while at work can lead to amazing results. For most young professionals today, peer recognition and a sense of purpose and achievement are important, and the availability of a social network at work can lead to a tremendous boost in motivation levels, team work and efficiencies.

Make gaming work for your organization. Most senior management executives today are focused on finding innovative solutions for the key employee engagement issues facing the IT/ITeS/BPO industry today:

- The need for meaningful employee engagement
- Attrition control
- Effective and efficient learning programs
- Greater collaboration within teams, and
- Transparency in performance appraisals and compensation

At Persistent, we set about looking for answers to mitigate these concerns through technology and behavioral analysis. We believed that the answers lay in using social networking and gamification – after all, everyone seemed so excited about maintaining their farms on Farmville. While our findings were on expected lines, what was surprising was the relevance and importance employees assigned to these ideas:

- Employees wanted a way to consolidate and show off their achievements, certifications and special skills, connect with mentors and mentees, and build their professional reputation within the organization. In today’s global organizations, an online avatar at work is the perfect answer to this, because there are serious limitations to how much you can share from work on external social networks.
- A private space for employees allows them to meet and greet other colleagues virtually, build friendships and share hobbies & interest areas. This in turn builds relationships across the organization, encouraging team work and collaboration.
- Continuous performance assessment systems with 360 degree feedback bring in transparency, more effective mentoring and course corrections, and reduce “end of year appraisal” stress and escalations.
- Effective Rewards & Recognition (R&R) holds the key. Virtual or physical gifts with a social acknowledgement and gifts with a personal touch ensure greater appreciation by employees. With a strong and vibrant enterprise social network, the investments in R&R made by employers reap huge dividends.

- Learning in the traditional classroom model is passé. Interactive games and animation videos for learning have a much larger impact as compared to the traditional lectures or PPTs. And one cannot underestimate the importance of points, leaderboards, badges and social media in the learning process as a means to inculcate a spirit of competition and peer motivation.

But do not get carried away. It is easy to get carried away and end up adopting a corporate social network without ensuring it crosses all the Ts and dots all the Is. There are lots of products and offerings that provide basic gamification and social networking services, without paying attention to the data security and privacy concerns. The application should ensure role - based access control as a fundamental building block for its security. Also, it is critical that data belonging to the organization is not shared or used in an unauthorized way. Thus, whether the application is hosted internally or in the cloud, it is important to keep the network secure while being social, and data integrity and security is not compromised.

Gamification needs to enhance and support, not change. Companies deploying enterprise social gamification need to ensure that these gamified applications are not operating in silos, and do not require a change in the business process! The real advantage of a social gamification strategy is in seamlessly bringing together data, workflows and people across the organization, and making them more effective at what they do. Existing investments in MIS, CRM and HR systems need to be retained and exploited. Therefore, it is critical that the social gamification platform deployed within the organization easily integrates with these existing applications, whether home-grown or off-the-shelf.

Gamification is a lot more than badges. There is a lot more to gamification than points and badges. The ability to map core management activities and operations as gamified actions will play a significant role in how your organization exploits the same core human tendencies and habits that made computer and online games a multi-billion dollar industry. From better engagement with employees to conducting effective meetings, our research showed that a slew of gamified social applications can be created for various work scenarios. This promises to fundamentally change the way we work, bringing fun and excitement back into the mundane as well as the critical, resulting in higher productivity and happy employees.

Results are already impressive and very encouraging. Persistent's social gamification platform eMee (visit us at <http://www.emee.co.in> and <http://www.facebook.com/Cafe.eMee>) uses unique game-based visualization and game theory to effectively combine people engagement, social collaboration, performance management, and rewards & recognition. We wanted to make the workplace fun for employees and convert mundane but critical management functions into highly effective and enjoyable activities for line managers.

This innovative approach has fundamentally changed the way we at Persistent engage with our employees and customers. Over the last year and half, the results have been phenomenal. *Nitin Kulkarni, Chief Operating Officer, Persistent Systems, says, "Attrition has dropped by more than 350 basis points, customer ratings have consistently gone up over the last 4 feedback cycles, and employee satisfaction scores are higher than ever before"*. With continuous assessment replacing end of year appraisals, managers were able to save over 2 calendar months of effort and stress in the last quarter and instead focus their energies on customers!



At BMC Software India, eMee is being used to drive collaboration and learning. *Tarun Sharma, Vice President – R&D and Head, BMC Software, India* says "As a technology company, we are seeing some very innovative ways of influencing desired behaviors with the use of gamification and social media concepts. We have launched Ninja Club on eMee, providing a platform for recognition and growth of capabilities and expertise. Our technical team can now look forward to connect with like-minded people, to practice and enhance their skills, to organize and participate in activities of common interest, to grow their technical skills irrespective of their current assignments, to mentor others and to be mentored by experts. We believe eMee is very promising and a valuable HR asset."

Let the games begin! It is essential for globally aspiring and growing organizations to have an enterprise social gamification strategy in place. Without one, companies will flounder and commit mistakes which can cost heavily in terms of reputation, customer satisfaction and employee retention. It is imperative for organizations to realize this and get social gamification savvy. Let's get started today!

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Siddhesh Bhoje is an Associate Vice President at Persistent Systems Limited, Pune, and holds an M.Tech degree in Computer Science and Engineering from IIT Bombay. Siddhesh focuses on delivering high value business solutions for Enterprises, addressing the key concerns of CXOs and their customers. Siddhesh's mobile-enabled solution for Bridgestone Europe won the NASSCOM Innovation Award in 2008 for Market Facing Business Model and Business Process Innovation. Siddhesh is an avid blogger, loves watching movies, and enjoys off-roading in his favorite SUV.