Gamification in the Arts

When and how to use game layers to enhance development and marketing.

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"Video games sit at the confluence of history, technology, and art in such a way that's found in no other medium a place where influences from every creative field meet, mix, and recombine." -Daniel D. Snyder, The Atlantic.

"What we are seeing in games is art at a world class stage design that is almost unmatched anywhere else. It has been very exciting to me to see so many ideas that integrate social good and efforts to make the world a better place through games." -Al Gore, former Vice President of the United States.

What is Gamification?

Gamification is the process of turning something into a game. In the context that I am looking at in this paper, it is the process of turning a development campaign, education program, and/or marketing promotion into a game or a process with a game dynamic such as a contest, sweepstakes, or scavenger hunt. The process of gamification adds one or more game mechanics into a scenario. The game layer that is created from the game mechanics can engage patrons who engage with it, a game play experience which can last from a few seconds to, potentially, months or even years of game play.

Games are more than just fun for children; gamers have contributed towards real world problems, most notably with Fold.it, the gene folding break-through made on the fold.it puzzle game online that made a major contribution towards HIV cure research. Fold.it is being put to use to solve the gene folding challenges of Parkinson's disease among others (Fold.it).

The gamification project can have a variety of different goals from education, to simple re-engagement, to fundraising. Today, games represent a new way of thinking, an engaged way of problem solving as individuals or groups. Crowd-sourcing, a popular way of fundraising, problem solving, and community building in all of its variations, is a

game layer. Games can solve problems, but they don't have to, sometimes, the goal is the game play itself, as games can also be art.

Why Gamification?

According to surveys done by Comscore, industry sources, and the US Census electronic gaming, device gaming, and even board gaming and among women has been growing for years (Comscore; Andrew Lipsman)_(Comscore; Berit Block). The implication of this growth is a clear: gaming culture is on the rise globally – with both genders, in all geographic regions, and throughout every socio economic classification. All indications point to the expectation that slow and steady growth will continue. From this growth we can extrapolate that larger and larger numbers of arts patrons are also engaging in gaming and will expect or even demand this as part of their cultural experiences.

When most people conjure the image of a gamer they generally think of the past: a nerdy 18-25 year old male, probably white. The face of gaming has changed significantly over the last twelve years and now both men and women, young and old, and people of all races are engaged in games on a regular basis. Simply put, almost every conceivable group of people is now engaged in gaming; not all groups, however, are engaged in all types of gaming.

According to a report put out in 2012 by the Entertainment Software Association (Entertainment Software Association), the average US household has at least one dedicated gaming consul, PC, or smartphone and 49% of households have two. According to these same studies, third of game players in the US are over the age of 36, roughly one third are between the ages of 19 and 35, and the remaining third are 18 and under. This means that two thirds of gamers in the US are adults and the average gamer age is 30.

The way in which people are engaging with games is changing. Console gaming (Microsoft X-Box, Sony Playstation, and Nintendo Wii) has been on a slight decline over the last couple of years, in part because of the time since the last consul releases being years ago (X-Box 360 released in 2005, Playstation 3 released in 2006, and Wii released in 2006) while social media gaming and mobile device gaming has been on the increase. It is expected that this trend will reverse with the next generation of consuls that will be hitting the market in 2014. Similarly board gaming has also been on the rise, according to the 2011 US Census section on Arts, Recreation, and Travel (Census), for the last twelve years with the explosion of number and quality of titles and

has drawn increasing numbers of board game geeks who wish to connect with people in person in the face of an increasingly electronic world (Geek).

So who plays games? What games do they play? Electronic gaming wise, women tend to skew towards games like The Sims (which is the "World's Biggest-Selling Simulation Series", and "Best Selling PC Game of All Time"), dance and fitness games, and social media gaming. Men tend towards first person shooters, strategy games, and sports games. Both men and women tend to engage in role playing games in roughly equal numbers. In the board gaming world less information is out there about consumption and engagement but it can be assumed, somewhat safely, that similar propensities exist throughout different platforms.

There is fierce debate in the certain circles, from luminaries such as the late film critic Roger Ebert and Thatgamecompany Founder and Executive Kellee Santiago about whether or not games can be art. Games released in the last ten years such as *Cloud* and *Flower*, are games that are meant by their designers to push the boundary between video game entertainment and art (Santiago).

It is easy to see the potential between game dynamics and the arts. Arts organizations, ostensibly, have wells of creativity to draw upon and creativity is one of the key elements to game design. Adoption of gaming as a tool for the arts, however, has yet to garner widespread support. The common perceptions of gamers put them outside of regularly targeted market segments in the arts world coupled with a reluctance towards experimentation brought on by the belt tightening of the recent recession has contributed to the fact that there have been very few entries into gamification from the world of the arts. A noteworthy use of gamer layers in the arts was the show **Best Before** by Rimini Protokoll which: "Pulls the multi-player video game out of the virtual realm and rewires it for an intimate theatre setting." (Protokoll).

How does an organization engage in gamification?

Games can be used to attract attention, deepen interaction, and retain interest. There are hundreds of books that have been written about game design for a variety of platforms: board games, table top games, electronic games, educational games, and so on. In an area of the world that the arts non-profit sector may be able to take advantage of gamification has become a subject of interest in the corporate world in general (Priebatsch). There are structures and resources that the corporate sector is creating around gaming and gamification that hold promise for the arts in terms of creating an easy to use tool kit. Ideas from this sector, such as ways to easily

incorporate game mechanics into your website can, be incorporated in a relatively short amount of time with the proper staffing (from Mashable Tech):

1. User Generated Content

Increase content generated by users on your site. By incentivizing content creation, the user becomes more engaged, thereby making your site richer and more dynamic, as well as improving its SEO. Content is mostly submitted through simple vehicles like comments, ratings or reviews. These are basic ways to get feedback from users based on the content you produce and present.

2. Sharing

Aside from being both repetitive and easy, sharing can prove incredibly useful in syndicating your content. With gamification elements, users feel even more compelled to syndicate your content. While sharing naturally lends itself to gamification, content publishers should be aware of one potential pitfall: rewarding the user simply for sharing is in violation of many of the major social networks' terms of services. Social networks prohibit immediate incentives for clicking the share button in order to prevent users from spamming their feeds with random content to earn points.

3. Feedback

The Facebook "Like," Google's "+1" and other reaction buttons serve as both content contribution and sharing tools. They allow users to express an opinion with just one click. Furthermore, you can incorporate gamification by rewarding users for "liking" content on your site — prioritize the opinions and feed activity of highly ranked users. For example, when a website's activity feed displays popular articles and top user reactions, a visitor will likely feel more compelled to click. Think in terms of Roger Ebert giving "a thumbs up" to a movie versus relying on someone less influential.

4. Social Login

Social login brings an invaluable layer into the game: a user's social graph. A basic principal in game mechanics states that users are more inclined to participate if they have some real world benefit behind the rewards. This can be as simple as increased reputation within a community. Once a user logs in via social APIs such as Facebook Connect or Twitter, she can then compare herself with gaming friends as well as social network friends, all in one space.

5. Keeping Score

Any good game mechanics implementation goes out of its way to educate users on achieving and advancing within a system. For instance, offer instructions alongside every badge, and show an indicator of their progress within that achievement. At the same time, you don't want to bombard site visitors with constant, blazing reminders. Instead, consider using simple JavaScript notifications that don't monopolize valuable site real estate. (Ferrara)

The tools to create these dynamics in the performing and visual arts are available through both high and low technologies at high and low price points. At the low end you can create an old fashioned scavenger hunt, live quiz game, or similar device for near to no costs. You can engage with audience members right before a show in your lobby or with patrons coming in to buy admissions to your museum for example. Using technology with a zero budget you can engage with the SCVNGR app (or similar applications): simply sign up for an account, watch the youtube 'how to' create challenges, rewards, and treks – and you are off! Remember that to engage in gamification you can use existing structures created on technological or via societal platforms such as using regular audio announcements at a summer festival to introduce patrons to your game, give updates, clues, rewards – play the game. At the expensive end of things you can hire a company to create an app for your organization.

In order to develop your own game, you need to know a little bit about game design theory. Roughly speaking game mechanics can be parsed out into a four broader categories:

- Achievement: points, levels, rewards, recognition, and gifts.
- Competition: leader boards, envy, varying challenge from human interaction, and the human competitive instinct.
- Cooperation: altruism, social fabric, communal discover, commerce, and teamwork.
- Ownership: building something that is yours, loyalty, self-expression, and loss avoidance.

Some ideas around goal setting:

1) Measure income vs expenditure for the project but bear in mind that since the idea isn't to make money, at least immediately, try not to go crazy on the rewards side of things (limit expenditure)- rewards often times work best when they are unexpected (aside from the ultimate goal reward of course)

- 2) Look into measuring attitude and perception, pre-game and post-game, either through quick polling or through self-assessment
- 3) Re-engagement should be a major part of your goals: getting the people who played the game to re-engage with your organization, and not just for the purpose of playing a game

It is worth reminding would-be project managers at this point in time, that the number one objective of any game project should be the fun of the participants. This should be a higher priority than any of the others. It would defeat the purpose and create more work for your campaign to surmount, if fun gets a lower priority and you end up turning your participants off.

Setting goals and expectations around a game project key is a key element to finding success. Gamification can work as part of, not replacing, a marketing or development campaign. It is best used to supplement efforts that are effective at getting patrons through your door. When approaching a gamification project look at the following organizational capabilities:

- The timing of the project: what activities at your organization fit best with the market segments that would be most likely to engage with a game layer?
- The time that the staff has available in the proposed development, launch, and during ongoing maintenance of the project.
- The fiscal resources available: extremely important if you are looking at an electronic game or app.
- The skill and knowledge related resources available to the project. If the game project is electronic or app based, do you have IT and/or game savvy staff, volunteers, and consultants/vendors to assist with development and testing?

After an initial assessment of your organization, you will need to take a look at your patrons and ask a similar series of questions:

- Do you have an accurate assessment regarding the demographics of your patron base?
- Which patron market segment do you want to engage?
- Is this market segment ready to engage? In other words, do they have the desire and means to engage in the medium of your game? Are they online? Do they download free mobile apps? Do they pay for mobile apps? Are they doing geocaching?

- Do you have an effective means of communicating your project to the market segments in question? (If not then you would be well served by building lines of communication and doing community building before proceeding.)
- What does successful engagement look like? How many people would you like to have participating, downloading, out in the field, etc by what time?
- What are competing factors for this market segment's time? What are the similar activities that would distract them from your project, how successful are they, and can you realistically compete?

Game Design

Game design is, unfortunately, something that not many people are skilled at. The chances of being able to find and bring on an experienced game designer for your project in your area are slim. This leaves consultants, or the process of educated trial and error. Using the iterative process create a game, try it out, go back to the drawing board and improve it; then try again; almost anyone can find successes in designing a game by using this process.

The first step to creating a game for your marketing or development project is to brainstorm. Using the previous two posts on games and gamification ask yourself about your audience and about who (what market segments) are likely to engage in your game project. Use what methodology works best for you at this point: flip charts and a facilitator, sticky notes that everyone puts on the wall, mix and match concepts where there are two groups and one generates game ideas and the other generates market segments, or any other technique that works for you. Don't work at this process for too long, about an hour is as long as you will remain creative.

Game playing is something that many people (in your area) are very very good at. In almost every community you can easily find dozens or hundreds of people who are adept at playing games, either electronic or in the non-virtual world, and can potentially help you with testing your concepts. Test your ideas before you move into implementing a full scale game! Testing means taking your game concept and having individuals or small groups of people try to play it and then give you feedback on what works, what doesn't - and how they both work and don't. This will, in turn, give you information on how you may modify the game, re-balance it for speed and pacing, fairness, fun, encouragement, and efficacy towards your ends.

Here, for example, are three ideas for dynamics with subordinate mechanics, target market segment, and an idea around pacing/time flow:

- 1) An external game A competition between your patrons (target ages 18- 30 as discerned by the type of prize you are giving out): for ten weeks, every week you post a riddle that once solved provides a clue about a grand prize. Competitors can cooperate but if they do they have to share the prize at the end of the competition. Only the first three people who arrive for the clue receive the clue and the results each week are posted via leader-board or on social media. The competition culminates in an event that, to get access to the participants must have registered and competed during the ten weeks. The winner(s) are announced, the prize is given out, and the next game is announced during the event as well.
- 2) An internal/external game A competition between your volunteers (target ages 40-60 as discerned by the type of prize, again): for an entire year you give the patrons that walk through your lobby a token that they can drop in a station near a volunteer post (with there being 4-5 total posts). Volunteers are always posted at the same stations and work as teams. Each month, an eye catching (be it gaudy, glamorous, or just beautiful) trophy is moved to the station that received the most tokens from patrons. Rules are set to govern how far the teams can go in order to earn the tokens from patrons. Each time the trophy is moved it is announced via your website, social media, and via your newsletter/enewsletter (if you have one). At the end of the year you give out additional prizes or badges for things like: most creative station team, most wins, longest streak of wins, and best month's effort.
- 3) An internal game An anonymous competition between teams comprised of a member of each department as well as two donors/volunteers at an organization set over the span of a week. The competition would be judged by a panel of community members who select the winner based on appeal, creativity, and quality. The internal contest would be to come up with a name, creative slogan, and a mascot for in order to get funding for a new program or effort in the next year. The judging would happen in phases with the winner of each round being announced after each one along with feedback for all teams. The overall winning team would be announced at the end of the week at a party and would be crowned.

When designing a game there is tremendous freedom of choice. Here is a way of framing the creative process, first choose what dynamics you want;

Competition: Do you want people to compete? Can this be anonymous? Do you want competition to be the driving idea?

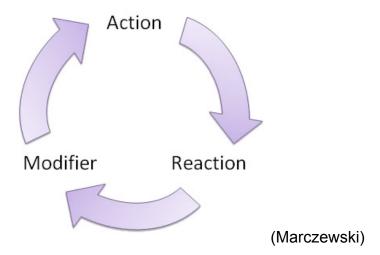
Cooperation: Will you make it necessary or advantageous to team up in pairs or groups either for the duration of the game or temporarily?

Ownership: Either online or in the non-virtual world you can inspire greater levels of engagement by allowing or encouraging players to create names or personas of teams or individual characters. You can encourage or require them to create fictional back-stories or non-fictional profiles and reward them for the completeness of their actions.

Achievement: Rewards, either by recognition, by granting advantages, or by payout for the motivating factors. You can use this to create a feedback loop and balance a game while it is being played.

"Feedback loops come in two main flavors; **positive** feedback loops and **negative** feedback loops. Whichever you are looking at, they are constructed in a similar way, with two or more phases.

- 1. User performs an action
- 2. Something happens
- 3. User experience is modified
- 4. Repeat" (Marczewski)



For more in-depth information on game design check out_The Art of Game Design, A book of lenses by Jesse Schell (from the Entertainment Technology Center here at Carnegie Mellon University) or Game Design Workshop, A Playcentric Approach to creating Innovative Games by Tracy Fullerton. The Gamasutra website also has lots of good information.

Gamification can be message, channel, and even marketing education. A game can be a marketing channel of its own for your organization or it can reside within a number of other channels. As a marketing tool, gamification is usually best tasked at enticing a specific market segment to engage in a free portion of your programming or educational efforts.

As barriers to participation abound, free, at least initially, is essential. The free doesn't necessarily have to last forever and there are plentiful articles about the freemium model, its merits and faults, for you to consider. Free is important because there are many, many other games out there that compete for discretionary time, although these games aren't necessarily in competition with your game. For example, a geocacher, may or may not be interested in other types of games but is probably interested in other scavenger hunts. Similar to all other segmentation, games have their market segments and it is uncommon for market segments to blur.

As part of moving into engaging audiences, test or otherwise, you will need to design the instructions for how to play the game. As with the game, you will need to test the instructions for clarity and user-friendliness. If you find the instructions getting too long (over a page at the longest) consider breaking them up into smaller portions and feeding them to the audience incrementally. For live action games you will need to test out your instructions by reading them aloud to a group to check for clarity.

To start using gamification as marketing you will need to plan. Begin in advance of your regular marketing cycle and work out the game before you include it in your marketing plan for the year or target period of time. Given that whatever game you create will be an experimental effort within a larger marketing campaign it should be apportioned resources as befits any experimental effort: aka don't stop doing what works in favor of using a gamification idea, rather use the gamification idea to engage with segments that are:

- Likely to engage with games (have been proven to like the type of game and the format you are exploring),
- Are at least somewhat likely to engage with your project/program/organization
- That you have a way of reaching effectively.

There is a common misconception is that all games compete with all other games. Rest assured that your game will probably not be in direct competition with blockbusters such as Angry Birds, Skyrim, or Settlers of Catan. Studies have shown that gamers tend to

focus their interests towards specific genre or platforms of games. For example, take the Sims series and the Halo series: both have had multiple different iterations and are extremely popular but the overlapping audiences between these two are minimal. Similarly social media gamers have very little overlap with geo-cachers, people who use GPS devices to do orienteering based scavenger hunts.

In order to effectively market in a gamification project, you will have to choose your mechanics wisely. The goal, under a large umbrella, is create a behavior. A game mechanic or dynamic, simply put, is an element of a game. Here are five from the SCVNGR game dynamics playbook (books on game design have many, many more, but this is a good taste):

1. Achievement

Definition: A virtual or physical representation of having accomplished something. These are often viewed as rewards in and of themselves.

Example: a badge, a level, a reward, points, really anything defined as a reward can be a reward.

2. Appointment Dynamic

Definition: A dynamic in which to succeed, one must return at a predefined time to take some action. Appointment dynamics are often deeply related to interval based reward schedules or avoidance dynamics.

Example: Cafe World and Farmville where if you return at a set time to do something you get something good, and if you don't something bad happens.

3. Avoidance

Definition: The act of inducing player behavior not by giving a reward, but by not instituting a punishment. Produces consistent level of activity, timed around the schedule.

Example: Press a lever every 30 seconds to not get shocked.

4. Behavioral Contrast

Definition: The theory defining how behavior can shift greatly based on changed expectations.

Example: A monkey presses a lever and is given lettuce. The monkey is happy and continues to press the lever. Then it gets a grape one time. The monkey is delighted. The next time it presses the lever it gets lettuce again. Rather than being happy, as it was before, it goes ballistic throwing the lettuce at the experimenter. (In some experiments, a second monkey is placed in the cage, but tied to a rope so it can't access the lettuce or lever. After the grape reward is

removed, the first monkey beats up the second monkey even though it obviously had nothing to do with the removal. The anger is truly irrational.)

Behavioral Momentum

Definition: The tendency of players to keep doing what they have been doing. Example: From Jesse Schell's awesome Dice talk: "I have spent ten hours playing Farmville. I am a smart person and wouldn't spend 10 hours on something unless it was useful. Therefore this must be useful, so I can keep doing it." (Schofeld)

Like with any effort in marketing, education, or development you need to have the infrastructure to manage the product, the gamification project, and the expected (and possibly unexpected) response. Have the infrastructure in place to be able to respond to the effects of the game, designing the appropriate channels for consistent tone, interface, and user-experience. Also make sure you have the resources to make sure the game goes smoothly without adversely impacting your organization's primary activities, mission, and brand experience.

Gamification in Marketing

Before embarking on gaming or gamification it is wise to consider your brand, your audience, and your goals. In order to motivate specific behaviors the right combination of mechanics and dynamics need to be in place and these can vary from audience to audience. Indeed, high powered consultants at high powered firms can be hired to help with gamification, but this isn't always necessary. A simple, well planned addition of gamification can increase time spent on a website by two or three fold. For instance, if a customer answers three questions correctly about your organization's history they get a 5% discount on their current purchase. Will everyone participate? Probably not, but it will deepen the experience for a number of people and potentially deepen their understanding and commitment to your organization.

Game projects like all marketing or development projects will require you to apportion time and resources. These resources will then return, if you create a game that your market segment wants to engage with- engagement behavior. If the game is designed well, you can create long term engagement behavior with the game players (if that is the goal), fulfill educational goals, as well as potentially monetize on the effort.

What do you want your return on investment to look like? Setting this goal, and then revising it after your testing phase can ultimately give you better accuracy in the long

run. Revising goals and return on investment expectations should also be done in subsequent iterations as you continue to run gamification projects. You have to strive to realistically predict measurable effects to your efforts. What do you want the game players/patrons to walk away with? Do you want the game to just familiarize a new market segment with your organization? Do you want the game to inspire them to buy tickets to your shows in the future or admissions to your museum? Whatever the goal of the gamification project, make sure it fits into the big picture: your marketing plan, your organization's mission, and your organization's brand.

Gamification for Development and Fund-Raising

Using gamification in order to boost development campaigns is an old concept. There have been non-profit organizations that ask communities to form teams, run foot or bicycle or other races together, and out fund-raiser each other. At the most successful end of these events you find millions of dollars raised for cancer, animal shelters, and a whole list of other causes.

Approaching a game for the ultimate goal of fundraising requires the right message for the right group of people at the right times. The fun run model harnesses something that people do anyway, jogging or running, and uses principles of community building in order to spur people to action. Your game can use the same ideas or you can ford your own way into gamification.

There are many ways in which you can structure the fund-raising portion of the game. The 'ask' as it were in the fun run model, comes when a participant asks his or her friends, family, and co-workers to sign up on the sponsorship list. A certain amount of money pledged for each mile run for instance. This model can be abstracted of course and your participants can ask for pledges for anything: number of photo checkpoints they cross, number of people who sign up for the flash mob contest, number of points they earn from the judges, etc.

How has gamification been used by the arts successfully in the past?

As discussed before, the line between games and art is blurring. The most visible example of arts organizations using gamification are to be found at organizations like. The Tate, which has launched a number for gaming applications for a variety of different audiences with a variety of different goals. The Tate, as a leader in this portion of the gamfication in the arts, has games to promote education of patrons across the world about their collection as well as visual art in general, has successfully marketed their

organization to potential patrons near and far, and has monetized on the effort through selling these products to iPhone and iPad users.

Beyond The Tate there are dozens of arts groups that are venturing into game content: such as The Royal Opera which has recently launched apps aimed at children such as "The Show Must Go On" and Jacob's Pillow's 'Dance Interactive' program with a basic looping quiz tied into video archival footage. They can use this data to fine target the apps they create towards market segments. As an industry, any arts group can use a game dynamic in order to drive deeper engagement in marketing or development. Activities such as the Glass Hunt on the Oregon Coast have proven successful at driving interest in art through a game layer (Greather Newport Chamber of Commerce, Oregon). 2am theatre has also used the scvngr application to drive engagement with creative efforts (2am Theatre). In the arts, a typical marketing campaign has a one way thrust: "buy tickets, come see our show". With games, your targeted audience can be enticed to have longer involvement time-frames and be induced to repeat engagement.

Conclusion

The market for games has grown. The market for games with arts content should similarly have grown. With the expansion of the demographic reach of games, it can be extrapolated that there are significant numbers of gamers out there that are also ardent performing or visual arts patrons. Gamification can be used as a tool to test your patrons for interest in game-type content and can also be used as delivery of such content. With increasing competition for leisure time, the arts could more effectively compete for the attention of patrons through tools such as games, thereby becoming more effective in the marketplace.

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