

How to Gamify Smart

Kevin Werbach and Steven Johnson offer this advice to educators interested in “gamifying” their courses:

to users for their blogging activities. The plug-in automatically calculates students’ points for some activities—such as commenting on a blog or adding a Twitter “follow-me” button. Johnson must check other activities manually, such as when students set up their own blogs. In these cases, students fill out online “Activity Submission Forms,” which Johnson tallies each week.

When students reach an achievement, the system automatically sends them e-mails that congratulate them and show them the badges they’ve earned. Johnson also posts a “Top 10 Leader Board” online that displays the top performers in the quest to give those students public recognition. To motivate the rest of the class, each week Johnson recognizes students who have moved up a level.

At the last class meeting, Johnson recognizes the top three or four students on the final leader board with school memorabilia, such as T-shirts and hats. He also gives a “judge’s choice” award to a student who did something unique. For example, one such winner had taken a photograph for each of his blog entries. “I want to show a distinction between quality and quantity,” says Johnson. “Some students care a great deal about each blog post, not just about their number of posts.”

So, does gamification help students learn? It depends, says Johnson. “You will always have your top performers, and you’ll always have students who struggle, no matter how many incentives you throw at them,” he says. “A well-designed gamification system has the most impact on the middle 40 percent to 60 percent of students. It motivates these students to do more.”

Be clear to students about which rewards contribute to grades and which do not. Although some rewards can be tied to graded work, the goal of the game should be to encourage students to engage with their learning experiences, says Werbach. “One of the powerful aspects of gamification is that it promotes meaning and motivation beyond just chasing a grade.”

Reinforce the fact that the game is meant to be fun. “You’ll always have students who’ll try to ‘game the game,’” Johnson notes. “Reinforcing its purpose will help you make sure that attitude doesn’t become the culture of the class.”

Don’t force students to play the game. The game is an incentive for students to take control of their learning, but they should have a choice about how—and how much—they play.

Choose incentives carefully. “The behavior you incentivize is exactly the behavior you’ll get,” says Johnson. He adds that some of the best activities to use as incentives are those that might otherwise be opportunities to earn extra credit.

Learn as much as possible about gamification. “Gamification is not some magic pixie dust that you sprinkle on top of something. You have to understand how to deploy a system that’s appropriate to the task at hand and the motivations of the people involved,” Werbach says.

He suggests that educators start by reading the book *The Multiplayer Classroom: Designing Coursework as a Game* by Lee Sheldon of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York. The annual Games, Learning, and Society Conference also provides valuable ideas for educators. Visit www.glsconference.org to find a link to video recordings of workshops from its June conference at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



	CIS/MIS Faculty		IT Directors		Schools with MBA CIS/MIS Programs		Specialized Masters CIS/MIS Programs	
	# of faculty	% of total faculty	# of faculty	% of total faculty	# of faculty	% of total schools	# of faculty	% of total schools
2007–2008	2,320	9.8	120	2.5	101	22.1	101	31.4
2011–2012	2,154	8.7	117	2.5	82	17.4	91	26.7

expected throughout most programs, they add, decreasing the need to have courses and programs specific only to CIS/MIS. In this regard, technology has followed the same path as e-business and business ethics, which were

first addressed with standalone courses before gradually being integrated into the core curriculum.

For information about the BSQ, visit www.aacsb.edu/dataandresearch/surveys/default.asp.