

lessons from FarmVille

improve performance reviews with a little social gaming psych...

when users become players

Users

- * Design system for compliance
- * Tick the boxes, get the job done

Players

- * Design system for engagement
- * People enjoy it & want to use it

which sounds more like a typical HR system?

Just a little thought experiment we ran when designing SonarCo. What happens when you borrow design elements from something fun (games) and apply them to something not so fun (performance reviews)? Can we use the underpinning psychology in new ways? Is it possible to make reviews... enjoyable?

nobody expected the unexpected

Facebook is big. Really big. You just won't believe how vastly hugely mind-bogglingly big it is.*

How many people do you know who aren't on Facebook? It is an enormous, unexpectedly popular phenomenon. And one of the unexpected outcomes of Facebook's rise to stardom is the explosion in popularity of Facebook games...

* Borrowed from Douglas Adams' Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy - but you knew that.

farmville has more active monthly users than twitter (ever heard it discussed in a business context?)

FarmVille has over 80 million active monthly users, so you could say it's kind of popular*. And these players aren't your 'stereotypical' gamer: the market is broader and more diverse than ever before. Everyone's a gamer. Your mother's gaming now!*

<http://mashable.com/2010/02/20/farmville-80-million-users/>
http://www.infosolutionsgroup.com/2010_PopCap_Social_Gaming_Research_Results.pdf



Your employees are on Facebook in their spare time, playing games, having fun. Just imagine what previously mind-numbingly boring tasks they might suddenly enjoy if you borrowed some concepts from gaming!

so how do we harness the same psychology that leads to social media and game engagement to drive workforce engagement?

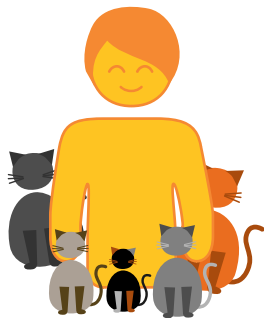


why we love playing games, 101 (the psychology)

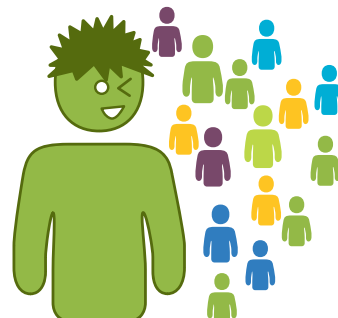
Collecting: People love to collect things, to complete the set. Collections of things are social currency.



Kids collect baseball cards



FarmVille players collect virtual animals



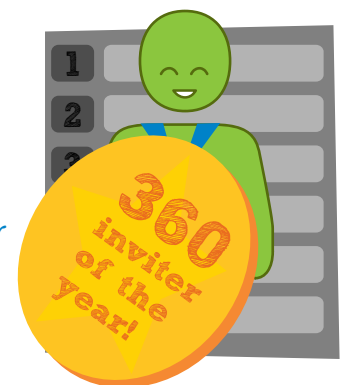
Facebook users collect friends



What if we could display our collection of completed goals for the year to our network?

Feedback: Games need notifications, leader-boards, stats, or ratings. Reinforced behavior gets repeated, and great games work by rewarding you with scores, rankings and awards for attainment.

In our experiments with leader-boards for review completion and 'medals' for meeting requirements (like entering goals, or inviting 360 reviewers), adoption accelerated dramatically.



Exchanges: All social media and games encourage structured social responses - a dialogue backwards and forwards.



Performance reviews are (should be) exchanges: of successes, goals, support, and problems between manager and employee.

But reviews are typically only a two-sided dialog, while social media thrives on multi-person exchanges. Should HR tools include exchanges between multiple people in an organization? Products like Yammer (internal IMing for business) already work on this principle...

Accessible: Anyone can play FarmVille and get instant gratification. Casual games need to be easy, simple and intuitive, and not require huge time investment to get started. These are obvious lessons if you don't want your system to become another chore on a long list.

let's get real...

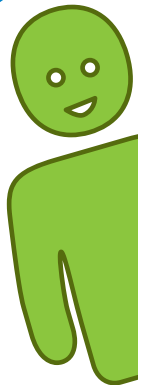
Social games aren't about escapism, they're about achievement and real competition - working to reach goals (though it probably doesn't seem like work...), sharing and comparing those achievements across a network.

How much more useful could performance reviews be in your organization if you focus on engagement and encourage a 'player' mentality?

Nick Yee

"...the purpose of all video games is to train players to work harder while still enjoying it. The success of online games demonstrates how seductive and concealed the work treadmill can be."

[http://www.nick.yee.com/pubs/yee - Labor of Fun \(2006\).pdf](http://www.nick.yee.com/pubs/yee-Labor%20of%20Fun%20(2006).pdf)



social games = fun
performance reviews != fun
social gaming psych + performance reviews = fun...?