ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

Year 7 - number 266 Wednesday 08 novembre 2023

Gamification in eLearning: myths to debunk

Gamification is a learning strategy that enables learning through the mechanism of play. Here is everything you need to know about its application.

Learning while having fun has always been a learning mode held in high regard by trainers and desired by students. In fact, the boredom of unengaging face-to-face lectures and the use of written text alone as a means of conveying content can lead users of learning courses to proceed sluggishly in their training because they are not adequately stimulated.

Conversely, the use of gamification can prove to be a valuable aid in eLearning, because it can convey complex concepts through engaging games and quizzes that are capable of leading the learner to get better and better, increasing his or her involvement and, consequently, his or her engagement in learning.

What does gamification mean?

Gamification refers to the set of all playful and gaming **strategies** that are incorporated into a **training course** with the aim of leading students to learn certain concepts or to explore others in an engaging way. That is, it is an approach to training that supports learning through mechanics and elements of play and to more engaging activities. Playful features are applied to existing content.

In eLearning, gamification is identified with the integration into online courses of **challenges, quizzes, and point games** complete with rankings and prizes to increase student engagement and enable them to continue learning without getting bored and with less effort.

The use of gamification in an online course can also be very effective in improving the quality of learning and student achievement. Indeed, this training strategy leverages intrinsic human needs and tendencies, such as the desire for achievement, the tendency to **compete** and change. The use of games and challenges, in fact, provides the student with an engaging learning experience, achieved through the tendency toward healthy competition, which encourages users to improve themselves in order to achieve a sense of accomplishment once the challenge is completed.

Concretely, gamification strategies can be implemented by incorporating point-based quizzes, rewards, and badges into the course to motivate the student, as well as interactive elements like videos and simulations.

The benefits of gamification in eLearning

Incorporating gaimification into an eLearning course, then, can improve students' learning abilities and make them more motivated in continuing the training process. The possible benefits of using this strategy, however, do not end there. Several, in fact, can be the benefits, both for the student and for the trainer and course creator. Gamification, in fact, can:

1. **Enhance the student's learning experience**. Challenges, quizzes and games could make it easier for the teacher to capture the attention of the student, who being more engaged will be led to learn the course concepts more easily. Moreover, the attention threshold will be higher because focusing on interactive activities is certainly less tiring than reading a written text or listening to an audio lecture. The opportunity to have fun, interact and be active participants in the learning process is a good training strategy, which can help users in understanding the concepts covered in the course of study.
2. **Facilitate skill development**. The playful mechanism leads the student to experience a more interactive, less tedious and less burdensome mode of learning, enabling him or her to develop new skills, with minimal effort, because it is characterized by play.
3. **Eliminate student resistance** to an education often seen as boring and burdensome. The use of gamification can be

useful precisely to break down this barrier and show users that learning can also take place effectively through playful activities.
4. **Increasing learning motivation**: increased student engagement and the development of healthy competition through point games, prizes and leaderboards also allows for increased curiosity and engagement among students, who are more motivated to learn and continue their education.
5. **Improving the learning environment**, which is more informal. This leads to the development of a more engaging and less restrictive environment, which overcomes barriers between teacher and pupil, leading to a more interactive experience.
6. **Provide immediate feedback** to both students and the trainer and course creator. Indeed, on the one hand, users can immediately test their knowledge through quizzes and games and understand what they need to improve in. On the other hand, the trainer can also consult the rankings of the various games and the mistakes made by his or her students, in order to assess whether there is a need to retake certain topics or content. Finally, the course creator can immediately check the success and effectiveness of the learning strategies.

The 10 myths to dispel

Despite the possible benefits that gamification offers, this strategy is not always taken into account or applied correctly. Sometimes, in fact, it is the beliefs circulating around the use of these more playful and interactive modes that win out. But not all of them are true. Here are the myths about gamification that deserve to be debunked:

1. **Gamification only works with young people**. Using games, quizzes and video games does not imply that certain age groups are excluded from this type of learning. Gamification has no gender or age and can be used with any audience. In fact, it is a methodology that can be adapted according to people's needs and abilities, because it aims at the involvement and motivation for learning of a wide range of learners. The experience they possess in the game is not important. However, it is essential to recognize the diversity and special needs in each user group, so that the strategy can be adapted so as to motivate its audience effectively.
2. **Gamification is only about games**. This strategy is not embodied in the creation of games, but in the introduction within the training course of elements and mechanisms typical of games. Gamification, in fact, relies on competition, challenges and the presence of prizes to create an engaging learning experience that enhances a sense of belonging to a group. To enhance learning, it is not enough to include games and fun, but it becomes essential to create a sense of involvement and belonging, which can motivate the student more to achieve his or her educational goal.
3. **Gamification is expensive**. Using this strategy does not always require expensive development. To incorporate simple playful elements, such as quizzes or competitions, into an eLearning course, the cost is minimal. Clearly, creating an eLearning course with more refined ludic-educational dynamics will require more effort and a higher budget, but introducing simple gamification tools can be simpler, less expensive, and just as effective in terms of learner engagement.
4. **Gamification is unique to everyone**. This learning strategy lends itself well to being applied to various types of content and to engaging diverse audiences. But provided it is tailored to the content it wants to convey and the people it intends to engage in the learning process. Gamification, to be effective, must be built according to the desired learning objectives, the audience it is aimed at, and the type of content it is meant to convey, because what works for a particular group of learners may not be effective for another. Customization is a key aspect to consider in creating gamification strategies that can lead to a real increase in student motivation and engagement.
5. **Gamification replaces traditional learning**. Gamification cannot be an alternative to traditional learning methods, but should be seen as an effective engagement and interaction tool to convey and make conventional approaches more accessible. The use of games, quizzes, and prizes can be useful in increasing learner engagement, motivation, and curiosity, but on its own it cannot be an effective mode of training, because it should always be accompanied by a wealth of content.
6. **Gamification works wonders**. Gamification does not provide immediate goal achievement and does not guarantee sure success and instant learning of the subject or study content. Learning requires engagement and motivation, which can be facilitated by gamification but cannot be imposed: motivation to learn must first be inherent in the learner: ludification strategies can help reinforce it, but they cannot make it come from nowhere. Moreover, simply adding playful strategies to a course does not guarantee learning success. Including games and quizzes is not enough: designing and developing a strategy that links gamification and traditional learning are essential to enable the student to achieve his or her goals.
7. **Gamification and game-based learning are the same thing**. This statement is incorrect, despite the fact that these two strategies are often seen as one: as already explained, they are distinct concepts with several **differences**. Gamification, in fact, refers to the use of game dynamics and elements applied to non-game contexts, while in game-based learning

real games are present as part of the training process.