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Gamification: learning by playing

Would you like your training course to be perceived by your students as a free expression of their will rather than as an obligation?

Like children, adults tend to learn more and faster if they do it while having fun.

There are different types and definitions of the game. This term does not always indicate a pastime: sometimes it is connoted as competition, other as a set of rules or a complex situation. According to Jeff Everhart (English Instructional Technology Trainer), "when we define the game in a learning perspective, we should focus on activities that have at least some of the following characteristics:

? aspects of fun or news;
? immediate feedback;
? unpredictable prizes (they are not necessarily linked to the objectives).

Aspects of novelty

According to Liz Wiseman, an important author and trainer, student learning is benefited by the novelties that elicit its commitment to the **discovery process**. Learning in this case proceeds by phases of research (sometimes even intuition) really fruitful for a **deep learning**. The element of novelty can be obtained with gamification: the game opens the doors to discovery and imagination, **interactive learning** that aims at solving problems (scenario-based learning) stimulates students to free their imagination and explore new solutions.

Immediate feedback

Feedback is very useful for increasing students' involvement and motivation. By continuously communicating their learning progress, we motivate the learners to study more and better, challenging them or sometimes simply comparing their successes and results with those of their peers.
In a game-based learning situation, feedback can only be continuous: students are encouraged to compare their results with pre-established goals and to **plan their progress** through strategic choices. But that's not all: through the rankings everyone can compare his/her performance to that of the other "players" and be driven to do more from a **healthy competitive spirit**.

Unpredictable prizes

According to Jeff Everhart: "In games, especially in educational settings, prizes are not always distributed with fixed criteria, but prizes are distributed at irregular intervals, which elicits two main reactions from the players. First of all it brings participants to try new ways and courses of action, because prizes are not always given with fixed criteria. Secondly, unexpected rewards are psychologically more motivating than expected rewards, as they push players to play for a longer period of time".
Do not limit yourself to rewarding the students at the end of the training course, when they have achieved all the objectives set. Gamification teaches **how useful it is to distribute feedbacks, awards, prizes and the like at irregular intervals**. For example, we can reward students with a "free coffee ticket" when they give a couple of correct answers.

The game as an expression of freedom

Have you ever had to learn something at a certain time, but at the same time you were in total loss of attention? Well, a well-built game can help you reduce the frequency of these alarms, motivating you and facilitating learning process. According to Dr.Peter Gray, learning psychologist: "The game is, first of all, an expression of freedom: it represents what you want to do, as opposed to what you are obliged to do. It gives a feeling of freedom. The game does not always generate smiles and laughter, nor it is defined by such signs of fun and entertainment, but it always is accompanied by a **feeling of wellbeing and involvement**, of the type: "Yes, this is what I want to do now ".

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