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Gamification vs serious games: what's the difference?

Similarities and differences between serious games and gamification, or ludicization of online courses.

Gamification in school, in business, in marketing are all ways in which we are used to declining the ludicizzazione of learning online or in presence. We tend to bring serious games, or serious games, into this practice as well. After all, the goal is always to make learning fun and engage the beneficiaries of training courses. These two approaches, however, are designed and implemented in a totally different way. To understand the main similarities and differences between gamification and serious games, let's start with their definitions.

Gamification meaning

In eLearning, gamification is an approach of embedding game elements within modules or online courses. It is not enough to provide the learning material to the learners to convey the knowledge and make the training effective.

You need the active participation of learners and there is no better way than to actively involve them in the training process, exploiting the natural propensity of human beings to play, have fun and challenge themselves. **Storytelling** teaches that if there's a compelling story, with characters they can identify with who face different challenges in order to achieve the desired prize, students are more motivated.

The elements of **gamification** are the challenge with peers or oneself, the action to get through a level and get to the happy ending, the prize. You don't need a lot of capital to apply gamification principles to an online course: all you need is an LMS platform with leaderboards, badges, quizzes. Prizes can also be real as coupons to redeem.

Serious games: examples

Unlike gamification that is applied to eLearning modules or in the classroom, serious games are games that can also exist independently. In fact, they are real games, like those for purely playful purposes. They are called "serious" because an educational aspect is added to the fun of the game.

In this sense, the logic is absolutely reversed with respect to gamification. To be clear, if gamification adds the game to an educational path, serious games add an educational objective to a game.

Some examples of serious games are games applied to health education, respect for the environment and awareness campaigns in general. Serious games are ideal for both pushing for change and encouraging **experiential learning** through simulations.

Serious games and gamification: what are the major differences?

Understanding the difference between gamification and serious games helps to better evaluate the offering of an eLearning company or instructional designer. Gamification is an approach and the serious game is a tool with which to **increase student motivation and involvement** by making learning fun and intriguing; and so far the similarities.

The main difference is that while gamification can be applied at low cost to any field, from eLearning to marketing to sales, a serious game requires a greater investment to create a specific tool that is a role-playing game, a board game or a video game.

Those who have an LMS, a system for managing training, already find basic gamification elements such as badges, rankings, points. The serious game, requires the design of a game that must teach, without excluding the fun.

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