How To Increase Productivity In Life And Work With Gamification

Have you ever tried to set your own record time while doing a boring task? Beat your previous commute time? Do more in a half-an-hour session or reward yourself after finishing a project?

While even these simplest ways of using gamification in life can bring tangible results, professional gamified products can go much further.

Having suffered a debilitating concussion in 2009, game designer Jane McGonigal was desperately striving to get back to her normal life. She couldn’t think clearly. Couldn’t work. Even get out of bed. This could have lasted endlessly if not for a magic potion she “cooked” on her own – a resilience-building game. Today, SupperBetter has been played by more than half a million people. Research by the National Institutes of Health has shown it helps to get stronger, more positive, and healthier.

**What is for you in this article?**

- discover biological mechanisms making gamified tasks more inspiring than ordinary ones

- find out what components make a game addictive

- get an insight into ways of gamifying your life and business

- discover 10 productivity apps to help you in any task, from doing chores to building relationships or saving for a holiday

**What is gamification?**

Gamification means that you turn a task into a game to motivate yourself to accomplish it. In other words, you apply the fun and addicting elements developed by game designers to real-world activities.

**Why and how does it work?**

As you get points and other rewards, achieve new levels with new challenges, see your name on a scoreboard, and explore new quests, your brain becomes excited and releases dopamine in the mesolimbic pathway (the reward pathway – highlighted in purple) creates higher motivation and makes us chase after a reward.

Image 1

In his book *Actionable Gamification: Beyond Points, Badges, and Leaderboards*, one of the world’s most known gamification experts Yu-kai Chou points out the following eight factors (“core drives”) making games and gamified tasks incredibly attractive.

1. Epic meaning and calling.

Games make you believe you’re taking part in something bigger than yourself by giving you a mission (save the world, for instance).

2. Development and accomplishment.

We’re wired to love a challenge. And if the challenge is followed by a reward, it causes a sense of accomplishment missing in many “real life” tasks. The sense of getting closer to your goal and achieving it can be provided by breaking your challenge into stages and showing your progress (points, gems, levels and more).

3. Empowerment of creativity and feedback.

As creative beings, humans are inspired by a chance to bring their imagination to life. One of the simplest examples can be a variety of customizable visual themes in a game.

4. Ownership and possession.

Virtual goods and money appeal to our intrinsic desire to accumulate wealth.

5. Social influence and relatedness or envy.

Human beings have a need to connect and compare with one another. Some of the examples of appealing to this need in a game include inviting your friends: competition and envy, group quests, using mentors, and social treasures.

6. Scarcity and impatience.

We want things we can’t have. We’re wired to intuitively seek for anything that is scarce or fading in availability.

7. Unpredictability and curiosity.

Variable rewards motivate a player to move forward and seek for a new reward, mostly to satisfy her curiosity (this is exactly how slot machine gambling works).

One more way to appeal to this drive is by using the so-called Glowing Choice technique. Whenever a player may feel in doubt what the next Desired Action is, a certain character or object is highlighted with a glowing exclamation point or question mark, so as to make the player continue.

8. Loss and avoidance.

Dying, injuring your character, losing coins or the number of lives are some of the ways of appealing to a player’s fear of loss.

**What does gamification have that “ordinary” games don’t?**

Our accomplishments in the world of a usual video game do not directly translate into real life. Gamification, by contrast, creates a clear, solid link between the virtual and real-life accomplishments. You get tangible rewards, like a clean house or a slimmer body.

In other words, we leverage the power of games to achieve a breakthrough in the real world. And the process of reaching your aim (which can otherwise be tiresome) becomes fun in itself.

**Become the game master in your life**

Have you ever got a feeling that whatever hard you try you don’t get closer a personal goal of yours? Have you ever longed for a motivation boost? Inspiration and support from your friends? Here are the ways to turn even the most boring things in your life into a game.

**Retro-style gamification**

First, let’s see how to gamify your life without special apps.

**1. Attach rewards to your to-do list**

Whenever you tick-off an item from a checklist, your brain gets a dose of dopamine. To get more of this mechanism, you may indulge yourself with custom rewards for fulfilling one or several tasks (have an additional break or a walk, watch a movie etc).

**2. Use surprise rewards**

Write down rewards on pieces of paper, then use the dice for choosing a reward whenever you tick-off a task from your to-do list.

**3. Engage in time-based challenges**

One of the most popular techniques of the type is the Pomodoro technique, which supposes breaking your working time into smaller sessions. Try comparing the results of each session – in this way, you start competing with yourself. Setting a time limit is a proven way to help your mind achieve the state of flow.

**4. Make a deal with your friend**

Add a social accountability aspect. For instance, you may share with each other a list of the five major tasks you want to accomplish by 7 pm. At 7 pm, you exchange messages saying whether there’s anything you’ve not finished. For every unfinished task, your friend is punished (with five pull-ups, for instance).

**5. Bring yourself to a new “level”**

In a video game, characters go through several new worlds. Real-life implementation of this principle may involve changing your job, moving to a new country, or doing anything that brings you out of your comfort zone.

**Top-10 gamified personal productivity apps**

There are a lot of productivity apps, but only a few consistently use gamification. Here’s a list of mobile apps specially designed for boosting your performance and mood, keeping you motivated and productive through the use of game mechanisms.

**Do It Now**

The structure of the task planner resembles that of a classic RPG. Having created your virtual character, you make a list of the most boring tasks and move forward to performing them in real life. While doing so, you upgrade your virtual character’s skills and features and level up. In this way, the app helps you to track your real-life progress.

Also, having performed a task from your list, you get some “gold,” which can be used to buy rewards (for instance, “Watch a movie”).

**Habitica (HabitRPG)**

A player is provided with a task system including Habits (things you wish to do more often or stop doing), Dailies (daily goals), and To-Dos (tasks that only need to be done once). But, what is more important, the process of fulfilling your tasks is turned into an addicting game, as it lets you level up your custom avatar, earn a mount for your character or some gold, which can be spent on new equipment, abilities or custom rewards.

Whenever you miss doing a task, you are penalized (for instance, by reduction of your character’s health). The app lets you invite friends to battle monsters together.

The downside of Habitica is that it doesn’t let you break a challenge into smaller stages, so it doesn’t suit larger projects.

image 2

**SuperBetter**

SupperBetter is designed to fight depression, anxiety, chronic pain, and post-traumatic stress. The range of potential goals is very diverse, from improving a skill to strengthening a relationship. Some of the situations when the app may be useful include looking for a new job, going through a divorce, surviving a loss of someone you loved.

SupperBetter teaches a player to stay positive and resilient in spite of any obstacles. There is a choice of pre-loaded adventures, as well as a chance to add your own goals. The obstacles you may meet in the real life are visualized in the form of “bad guys,” while your daily efforts take the form of quests, for which you get rewards and power-ups.

There is a social component, enabling you to invite your friends, “Allies,” who can cheer you up through the built-in comment feature.

**Forest**

A gamified way to beat a phone addiction. You plant a seed, which grows into a tree in 30 minutes provided you stay concentrated and focused. If instead of working you check your social network accounts or play a game, the tree turns into a rotting log.

At the end of a productive day, you’ll enjoy the view of a young forest, in which each of the trees stands for half an hour of work. You can invite friends, show them your forest and compete with them, earn rewards and discover new tree species.

**Productivity Challenge Timer**

The app based on the Pomodoro technique aims at helping you concentrate while working. It breaks working sessions into smaller sprints and lets you have a short break at the end of each sprint. Gamification is used in the way your statistics are displayed: the system gives you a rank (what about “Unrepentant Slacker,” to start with?) and sends humorous messages.

**LifeRPG**

Having chosen your goals (missions), you then break them down into smaller sub-missions and create custom rewards. You also have a chance to assign skills to your mission and watch them level up. You may sort your missions by your energy

**END OF PART 1**