

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Using Gamification  
To Drive Business  
Development  
Performance

By David Freeman

It's time for "that" meeting again. Yes, the one where the Managing Partner, Executive Committee, and other top leaders complain about weak rainmaking efforts from a big chunk of the firm. You've provided training, offered significant marketing support services, invested in technology, and have even adjusted compensation, so why hasn't the needle moved? What are we missing?

One answer may be found in research conducted by the Gallup organization. According to its surveys of millions of workers, the single most important determinant for improving performance is the engagement of the workforce. That means that while you, as leaders, may care about achieving revenue growth goals, most of your lawyers may not. Let's get real ... we're dealing with very busy, highly paid people. Why should they want to do more?

## MORE OBSTACLES

In addition to being busy and financially comfortable, there are other reasons why lawyers have not become selling machines. For some, they just don't know how — they lack the necessary knowledge to make a sell happen. Others may have the tools, but not the habits — the kind of routines needed to make business development a high priority every single day. And for

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others, there is little motivation, satisfaction and enjoyment because the payoff feels so far off into the future.

What's needed is a different management approach that can teach, remind and inspire. One that can motivate lawyers to do what we need them to do. One that can transform tedious, boring tasks into pleasurable activities. The answer, in a word, is "gamification," one of the hottest management tools for increasing employee engagement.

## GAMIFICATION

Mary Poppins had it right: "In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun." If we make business development a game and make it enjoyable, they will come.

Now, many of you are thinking, "My lawyers would never play a game." First, take a look at people on a train or plane. Many are playing meaningless games on their phones, yet they are highly engaged — some might say addicted — to continue playing. And, guess what? Many of those people are your lawyers, already comfortable with playing games. By tapping into their pre-existing game-playing habits, you can access a new source of energy, focus, and time applied to your initiatives.

To those of you who have "tried that here and it didn't work," that may be true, but often, the culprit is the execution and not the approach. In fact, the Gartner Group estimated that 80% of corporate gamification efforts will fail because of poor design. Therefore, before giving up, consider whether how you built it, rather than the concept itself, killed the effort.

Overall, gamification is a hot trend in management circles. Brian Burke, a consultant with the Gartner Group and author of "Gamify," defines gamification as "... the use of game mechanics ... to engage and motivate people to achieve their goals." There is over two decades of research on how to apply gaming techniques to drive business results, and according to estimates made by the Gartner Group, "40% of Global 1000

organizations will use gamification as the primary mechanism to transform business operations (in 2016)". That's worth repeating and emphasizing — "... the primary mechanism to transform business operations." Our corporate cousins are way ahead of us when it comes to running a business, so let's incorporate their best practices into our operations.

## DESIGN ELEMENTS

This topic can go on for literally hundreds of pages, so here is a quick takeaway: Gamifying a business process is more than merely assigning points, putting up a leaderboard and presenting badges or rewards for success. While these can generate some short-term action, they often fail to engage longer-term behavior. Truly well-designed approaches incorporate intrinsic rewards — elements that provide a sense of personal satisfaction. As an example, Daniel Pink, in his book "Drive," says real change occurs when the focus is on internal drivers like autonomy, mastery and purpose.

Gamification experts layer in these elements, as well as other components such as scarcity, unpredictability, and social influence. In fact, truly comprehensive models address factors like game dynamics, motivational psychology, behavioral economics, user experience, user interface, neurobiology, technology platforms, and business systems in order to maximize results.

HOW TO USE GAMIFICATION  
FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

You are limited only by your imagination and business needs. You can gamify initiatives like client service, cross-selling, team activity, conference participation, individual business development, leadership, writing blog posts or publishing alerts, alumni relations, LinkedIn activity and innovation. When you do get started, make sure you get it right. Don't forget the wisdom contained in the classic shampoo commercials,

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"You never get a second chance to make a first impression."

Start small, run pilots and work with the coalition of the willing in order to gather early successes that can serve as a springboard for wider adoption. Also, by starting small, you can iron out any wrinkles before rolling it out to the rest of the firm.

Additionally, realize you're working with a bell curve. Your top

performers will stay at the top, bottom performers are nearly impossible to move, so focus on your middle 60%. This means you must provide opportunities for that 60% to shine, perhaps by providing recognition for improvement, for competing against others in their own category, or for success over defined periods of time.

Finally, once the process is rolling, flip on the internal PR. Feed the internal desire for peer recognition by lavishing ongoing praise on those who are taking on the challenge and

who exhibit the behaviors you seek to reinforce. Acknowledge at group meetings, in internal publications and one-on-one to help provide ongoing fuel to keep people going.

### **CONCLUSION**

Creating a successful gamified program requires extensive analysis, planning, and design, but once you figure it out, you can access a new level of organizational energy that can transform your lawyers and provide significant returns to the firm.

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