



GUIDE TO GAMIFICATION GREATNESS

| 10 Best Practices for Keeping Employee Engagement Fresh

OVERVIEW

Gamification is the process of applying game mechanics to non-gamified environments such as contact centers. It has been lauded in recent years for its value in improving onboarding training results, keeping agents constantly motivated, and incentivizing behaviors that help them meet and exceed individual, department and corporate objectives. Although the first efforts began years earlier, gamification started to gain popularity around 2010.

Today, gamification has been embraced by companies in virtually every industry for its effectiveness at enhancing employee satisfaction, and for making learning and improving performance more fun. By doing so, it also elevates the customer experience and builds loyalty.



53% of technology stakeholders say that gamification will be widespread by 2020.

- Pew Research Center

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Introduction

GAMIFICATION AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

There are many [benefits](#) to contact center employees that leverage gamification. They receive recognition and rewards which incentivize them for a job well done. They receive perpetual feedback and constant visibility into their (and their teams) performance against their key performance indicators (KPIs) and their peers. Gamification helps improve performance and keeps contact center staff motivated to continue to improve. Furthermore, it keeps contact center employees happy, which impacts customer experience and satisfaction. In short, gamification produces a more [engaged](#) workforce.

Businesses that are serious about future growth simply must embrace employee engagement. Here is why:

- Employees who are engaged are 27% more likely to report “excellent” performance. ([Gallup](#))
- Companies with highly engaged employees have an average 3-year revenue growth 2.3 times greater than companies whose employees are only engaged at an average level. (UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School)
- Companies with engaged employees outperform those without by 202%. ([Business 2 Community](#))

- Customer retention rates are an average of 18% higher when employees are highly engaged. (Cvent)
- Companies with high employee engagement scores saw 65% greater share-price, 26% less turnover, 20% less absenteeism, 15% greater productivity and up to 30% higher CSAT levels. ([Queens School of Business](#))
- Teams with high employee engagement rates are 21% more productive than those with low engagement. ([Gallup](#))

 Gallup reports that national engagement levels hover around 30 percent – leaving [70 percent of the country disengaged at work.](#)

Gamification can have a tremendous positive impact on employee engagement. Although launching a program can be easy, keeping gamification fresh so that users continue achieving sustainable results requires more attention. Check out these Top 10 best practices.

Best Practice #1

START SMALL

When developing your gamification strategy, start with a deep understanding of the behaviors you want to drive. Define these behaviors in great detail. Increasing sales is a high-level outcome, not a behavior. You must define all of the specific actions required to increase sales in grand detail. For example: complete 50 contacts per day; send appropriate readiness content based on where leads are in the sales cycle; once a true prospect has been identified, add all decisionmakers and influencers into CRM; list prospect pain points and issues they are trying to solve; present proposal, etc. These are the behaviors you can effectively drive through gamification.

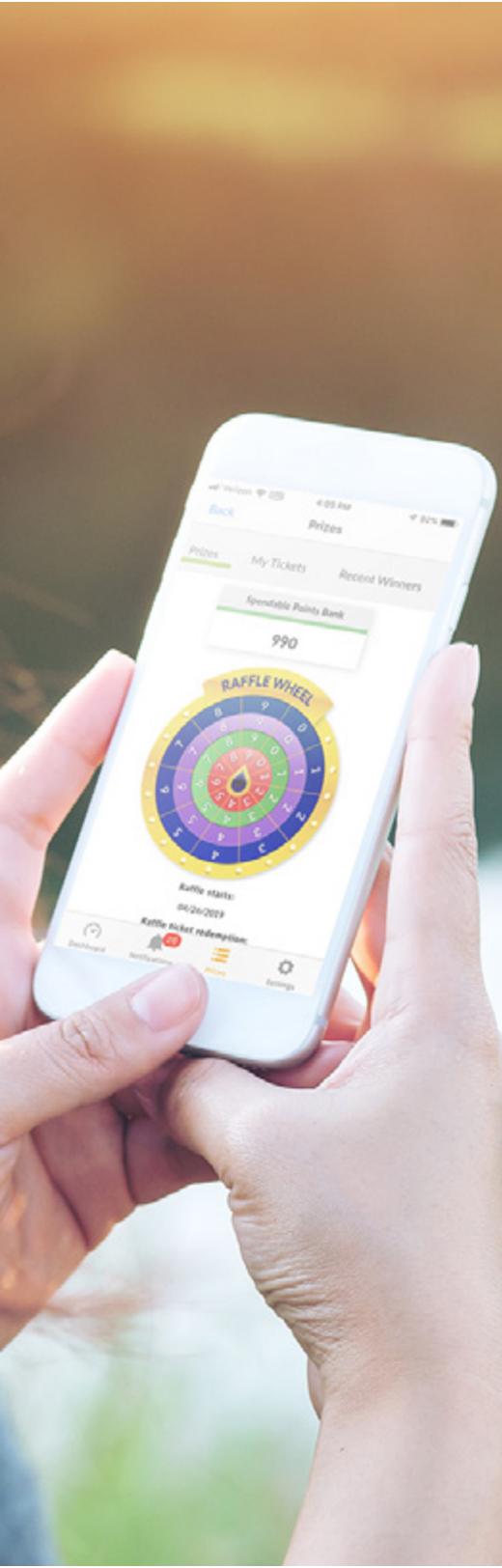
It can be tempting to create a multi-dimensional gamification solution with many badges and levels right out of the gate. However, **simplicity is best. Start small and test the waters.** Pick one thing and build from there.

You will also want to **keep the rules simple.** Provide a tutorial level so all users can easily learn them. Gamification should be about practicing and learning the desired behaviors, not about knowing the rules.

Scoring should also be easy. Users should be able to understand how their actions relate to the score so that it is clear what they must do to succeed. Run various scoring scenarios to identify and address potential problems before they occur.

Regarding dashboards, less is more. Keep them small to begin with, but allow personalization so that users can add their co-workers. Also provide context by structuring them by department or location. This allows users to see how their actions are helping to achieve a larger goal.

After your agents achieve early success with gamification and you learn what works well and what could work better, it is time to innovate. Observe and consult with your agents to brainstorm new functions, behaviors and challenges to add to the program to keep everyone engaged and productive. **A gamification program is not a once and done endeavor.** Keeping users motivated requires continuous updates and improvements.



STATE CLEAR GOALS

Before you introduce gamification to your team, it is important that you **set and then communicate clear objectives**. Be sure that you can answer the questions:

- What is the point of the game?
- What is in it for my team?

Give agents a sense of the endgame, what you ultimately want to achieve with gamification and why they should care.

Support from executive leaders is essential, and they should view the launch of gamification as a time to talk to the team about the importance of the program and what their expectations are for contact center management and agents.

It is important to remember that competition is just one aspect of gamification. It can add excitement and make learning more fun. But **do not lose sight of your intended purpose** to ensure that the competition does not get out of hand. Positive reinforcement, team work and collaboration will lead to agent engagement, learning and improved performance. Make sure the competitive aspects are strong and relevant enough to encourage users to learn, but not so strong that they demotivate those who consistently do not make it to the top of the leaderboard. One way to avoid this is to **tie performance in the game to a user's mastery** of the content. You also want to ensure that goals are attainable so that users stay motivated to continue to play.



“ Based on first-day surveys done prior to deploying gamification, only **40-50%** of them knew their goals. After deploying gamification this figure rose to **over 90%**.

– Matt Coffey, GM, Sekure Merchant Solutions

Think of gamification as a way to amplify desired behaviors and choose behaviors to gamify that will have long-term impact. In order to prevent user fatigue, track users' progress and appropriately **recognize and reward milestones** as well as completion of goals. Show them their colleagues' scores and progress. Reset the leaderboard for each game module to keep the competition fresh and reduce the chance for anyone to have a permanent advantage. It is also crucial that you know your users and understand what will motivate them to change their behavior.

In addition, you will want to **know what is the most effective timescale for behavior change** and how long you want the behavior to last. You probably want product and company knowledge and desired soft skills to last forever. But other games may be tied to special sales promotions or quarter-end goals. These would be more time sensitive and have a shorter timescale. They would also require more immediate feedback. Choose both short and long timescale behaviors to gamify.

Another powerful way to engage users is to **frame actions and ideas within a compelling context**. Explain why they are being asked to take action to earn points, search for a treasure or survive the mission. This will provide a reason to interact with your content.

Most importantly, the **behaviors you gamify must generate real value to your users and the company**. It is this "value" that keeps users in the flow of the game, advances it and drives sustainable behavior change.

BJ Fogg's Behavior Model [indicates](#) that there are three elements that must converge in order for a behavior to occur.



Be sure to consider all three elements when designing your gamification program.

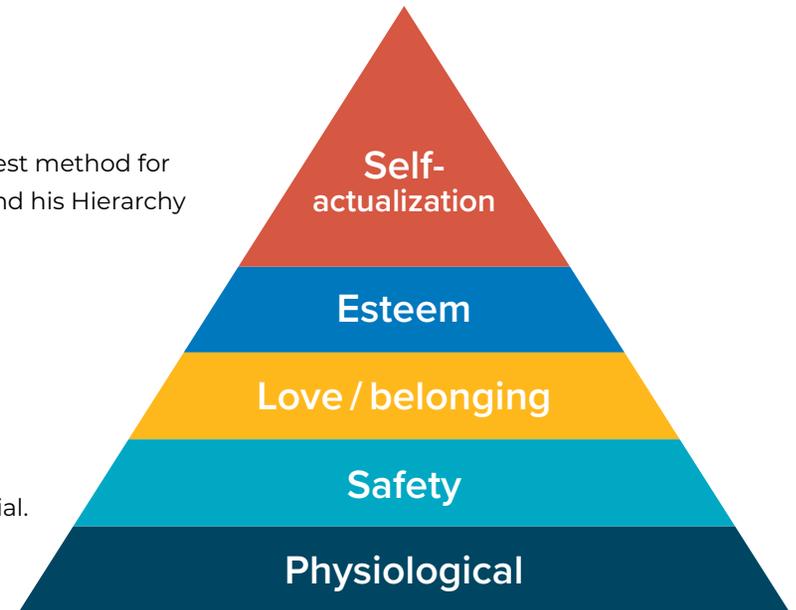
| Best Practice #3

USE SCIENCE TO ADVANCE LEARNING AND SUSTAIN MOTIVATION

Motivation is what encourages users to continue the game and advance their learning. The best method for motivating users is to employ scientific motivational theory. According to Abraham Maslow and his Hierarchy of Needs, there are [five](#) needs that motivate action.

1. **Physiological.** The first level addresses basic physical needs for survival
2. **Safety.** This level refers to the need for security and well-being.
3. **Love and belonging.** The next level is the need to belong.
4. **Esteem.** This level is the need to feel valued and attain recognition.
5. **Self-actualization.** The highest level refers to an individual's need to reach their full potential.

Maslow theorized that the lower level needs must be satisfied before the higher levels of need can be met.



There are other scientific theories of motivation that can be applied to gamification as well. According to Scientific American, there are three basic [elements](#):

1. **Autonomy.** When you are in charge, the likelihood of achieving your goals over a period of time increases.
2. **Value.** When you see value in the content and also in your actions, you improve your chances of goal attainment.
3. **Competence.** When you make progress and start to see improvement, you are more likely to stick with the program. In fact, those who value hard work over innate talent tend to be more motivated to keep learning.

Using these and other theories of motivation when designing your gamification program can go a long way in achieving and sustaining user success.

CHOOSE APPROPRIATE REWARDS AND INTERVALS

Rewards play a major role in the success of your gamification program. They provide milestone goal posts to engage your agents and keep them motivated to continue the game and accomplish the final objective. Although it is a good idea to **provide simple single-task games** with more frequent and small rewards when a user is new to gamification, constantly throwing points, badges and rewards at them thereafter can have a negative effect long-term. You risk diminishing the value of the rewards, which can cause users to not take them seriously.

When you group behaviors and reward your agents for completing a series of actions rather than accomplishing each one, you motivate them without over-incentivizing them. Varying the value of rewards also makes them more attractive and better motivators for users.

You also want to **mix up the kinds of rewards you offer**. Fixed action rewards are those given for a specific action. For example, complete 100 calls, or 5 demos a week. Paced rewards work well to keep users engaged. These are the types of rewards that require users to collect several of them in order to redeem for something larger. For example, collect three tokens and trade up for cash or non-cash prizes such as a \$25 gift card, a free lunch or a prime parking spot for a month. Unexpected rewards are given for deeper level engagement. They are spontaneous, appreciated longer and provide powerful word-of-mouth excitement for the program. An example of a spontaneous award would be one in which achievers spin a wheel to determine their prize.

It is best when **rewards increase relative to the achievement**. A reward for finishing a course on compliance or closing a sale should be bigger than one for completing HR forms or adding 10 new contacts into a CRM system.

Leveling up is a way to keep agents motivated to move through content organized in a specific progression. It requires completion or mastery of one level before getting access to the next. Levels typically increase in difficulty as the game progresses and require skills acquired in all previous levels. Leveling up plays to the user's drive to conquer harder and harder tasks and their desire for higher recognition and reward.

Badges can equal bragging rights. They can be displayed on an agent's profile allowing them to display achievement for the skills they have acquired. Badges can also be shared, which brings a social component to learning.

Personalized home pages also motivate agents. In addition to displaying reminders along with relevant stats, they can direct agents to content with tips on how to master the next level.

Best Practice #5

CONSTANTLY CHANGE THE EXPERIENCE

As we have already said, when designing your gamification program, you want to start small. But you also want to **“think” long-term**. You do not need to have every aspect completely set up at launch, but it is a good idea to give some thought to how you might change it up to keep agents motivated and engaged.

Some ideas that have been successful with companies using gamification include: creating different groups, moving the goal posts over time, introducing new target categories and mixing individual and team goals. Let's expand on each one.

Create different groups. There are many ways to define groups once your agents are ready to tackle more sophisticated and multi-task/multi-player games. Obvious groups would be those by team, department, location, etc. A great way to make the game more interesting is to create different groupings, such as those with birthdays in the same month, those with the same color hair, and names that begin with a specific letter. Or you can use normalization to group agents using historical data across all KPIs. This feature can take agents who work in different functional areas or sell different product lines, offset them by handicapping points, and create groups that have common KPIs. These types of **competitive groups foster collaboration** and provide an opportunity for staff to work with agents outside of their team. They also level the playing field, create camaraderie among departments and lead to a more unified working environment.

Be creative. It does not really matter what criteria you use. The important thing is to change it up so that agents do not get too comfortable with any one team. This keeps them focused on their best game, promotes new chances to get on or to the top of a leaderboard, and provides an opportunity to learn to strategize with people they may not be used to working with.

Move the goal posts. To keep gamification fresh, you need to continue to challenge your agents, such as introducing [multi-tiered](#) goals and new scorecard targets. After your team demonstrates task and behavior mastery, it is time to provide a new challenge. Level up to continually improve performance. Reward for most improved in addition to mastery. Creating a new normal and leveraging game mechanics to up the goal, will raise engagement and lead to even better bottom-line results.

Change target categories. Recognize that improvement of some goals has a cap -- for example, productivity and sales. You can only stretch so much to create a new normal and make it stick. At that point, you might want to focus gamification on other aspects of the business. You can use speech analytics data to identify additional areas that need improvement. Perhaps you will want to focus on agent quality or compliance. Define the desired behaviors that support high level performance for each and then build them into gamification. The new challenge will ignite motivation and nurture continued engagement.

Mix individual and team goals. Remember Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs? The lower level needs can be satisfied by attaining simple, individual goals. These goals are important and must always be part of the gamification mix. After all, you need to take care of your own house in addition to caring for others.

Team goals are also important. Fostering collaboration and mastery of the higher-level needs requires more advanced techniques, which oftentimes means developing the skills to work effectively with others. Team challenges should group agents across the performance spectrum. In other words, include top, middle range and bottom performers. It is not only the tasks that must change, but also the rewards. This requires an understanding of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation is external, intrinsic arises from inside each agent. They each have a different effect on human behavior and action. Some examples of [extrinsic](#) motivation include participating in a contest to win a prize or exhibiting certain behaviors and meeting objectives to receive a bonus. Examples of [intrinsic](#) motivation include making progress toward achievement of personal growth goals and acknowledgement for work that is performed competently. Goals that require collaboration with others require intrinsic motivation. You want to make sure that your gamification program has a good mix of both individual and team goals and taps into both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

CREATE A POSITIVE UX

To engage agents and create a positive user experience (UX), **good gamification design is essential**. The user interface should be human-focused and complement the game elements to promote goals, progress and achievement. The design must encourage users to keep playing for more points and rewards. It should be clean and simple and provide quick and easy access to whatever players need.

Here is a list of motivation [principles](#) that should be factored into game design.

- **Involvement in something bigger than oneself.** It is important for players to understand the greater cause, not just what is in it for them. More altruistic components might include adding rewards for others. Perhaps players can pick from a variety of proposed causes. As they achieve certain goals, the company makes a donation on their behalf to the cause of their choice.
- **Sense of accomplishment.** Users are incentivized when they know they can overcome challenges, are making progress, and are developing meaningful skills that will help their performance and serve as a stepping stone to their personal career goals.
- **Receiving feedback.** Perpetual feedback is one of the hallmarks of gamification. Based on their actions, users receive real-time feedback, coaching and even next-best action guidance. They also receive feedback on their progress and mastery compared to other players. Be sure to provide positive feedback when a player makes progress not just toward their goals, but relative to their previous performance – such as points and badges for improvement, in addition to mastery.
- **Feeling ownership.** When users feel a sense of ownership, they are motivated to play more to continue to show progress. You might consider offering badge collections to keep players engaged. Another way to enable ownership is by allowing users to customize their desktops. – everything from colors and backgrounds to adding content to what displays on their dashboard.
- **Exercise creativity.** Perhaps there is a way to allow users to choose some of the elements of the game, or create their own custom badges. Anything that allows users to infuse their own creativity into gamification will keep them more engaged.
- **Relatability.** Users feel an emotional connection with people and things they relate to. Make sure the game experience contains relatable components. By doing so, you will accelerate gamification adoption and accomplish sustained use.
- **Social influence.** Add a social component to the game. This is an effective way to facilitate a feeling of connectedness. When players feel connected to one another, they start to identify with the group and their desire to perform well as part of the team kicks in.

The game experience is ever-evolving. Keep in mind that when players first start to use gamification, they should encounter a tutorial. Then they can move on to basic missions. Highly engaged and more seasoned users will be interacting in more complex ways. Always provide an easy way for players to provide feedback on what they like and do not like about the game and then be sure to put recommended improvements into play.

| Best Practice #7

LEVERAGE ANALYTICS TO TRACK BEHAVIOR AND ATTAIN GOALS

Analytics plays an important role in gamification success. On the front end, it can reveal areas where agents can improve the quality of their interactions with customers.

Here are some of the performance KPIs that analytics can monitor:

- First call resolution
- Average speed to answer
- Average handle time
- Average after work time
- Customer satisfaction rate
- Compliance adherence
- Sales effectiveness

Since analytics solutions can capture all conversations agents have with customers across the various communication channels, synthesize them, and then report on agent and customer intelligence, areas for improvement are easy to determine. Once identified, the necessary behaviors can be gamified **to accelerate agent achievement** of the goals that you want to drive.

On the backend, analytics provides the mechanism for tracking and measuring agent behaviors to determine progress and goal attainment. These measurements will help you understand what is working and what is not with gamification, so that you can tweak the program for even better results. It will also provide the information you need to know when it is time to gamify a new set of goals.



| Best Practice #8

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

As is true with many good programs, some people may lose interest, while others will try to abuse it. Such can be the case with gamification. By being aware, you can add elements into the games, and build milestones and stop points **to eliminate unintended consequences**. A few of these potential undesirable consequences include: disengagement, agents trying to 'game' the system and excessive behavior.

Most people appreciate rewards and recognition. So, if you only reward the top performers, agents that never reach that pinnacle could become disengaged. If this happens, gamification is not having the desired effect for these users. Be sure to monitor engagement and make the necessary adjustments to ensure that all agents have a chance to be recognized and rewarded for their progress.

Contact center agents are human. And there will always be some people that will try to beat the system. They will try to find loopholes and shortcuts to attaining goals and getting rewards. Although it is impossible to change human tendencies, it is possible to mitigate a cheater's impact on others. Here are some things to try:

- Once you have a baseline, **set reward limits**.
- **Reward specific actions** such as reading a specific article or viewing a specific video within a particular timeframe.
- Monitor agents **and call attention to abuses** (not abusers) in public. Sometimes just knowing they are being watched will deter bad behavior.

Some players think more is better, meaning that they will overdo a desired behavior. Setting daily and total limits on actions such as sending tweets or uploading images will reduce or stop these obsessive behaviors all together.

| Best Practice #9

CREATE A COMMUNITY FOR PLAYERS

When agents start to engage with games that will take a few weeks or longer to complete, consider starting a player community. **Communities** address the player's inherent need for belonging and esteem. They also **foster collaboration and sharing**, which allows players to help each other succeed. When agents level-up to play multi-tiered, multi-player games, they might want to form sub-communities with members of their team. That way they can share strategies and tips based on where they are in the game. The point, of course, would be to **share knowledge and help their teammates** learn what they need to in order to progress.

Communities create a shared sense of value, which is another way to keep agents engaged. You might even consider gamifying the creation and use of communities. If the end goal is to have the greatest number of agents achieve mastery of desired behaviors, a community might just do the trick.

How can
communities add
to a gamified work
environment?

-
- Provide a deeper experience for games that span weeks or longer
 - Address the needs of belonging and esteem
 - Foster collaboration and sharing
 - Create a shared sense of value

Best Practice #10

PLAYTEST AND MARKET INTERNALLY

Playtesting throughout the gamification design process provides insight as to whether or not goals are being achieved. Self-testing by the development team and gamification champion is good for the first round. During this phase you can test and even experiment with the basic concepts of the program.

Before launching gamification or releasing major changes to the program, it is a good idea to **playtest with a small group of target users**. This will allow for the identification of bugs, dead-ends and cheats, so that they can be addressed before rolling them out to everyone. You may want to be present during target group testing so that you can observe the play, take notes and ask questions.

Feedback from the pilot group can be invaluable. It can tell you whether users enjoy the game and if the goals are achievable without being too easy. It also provides insight into any design elements, rules, mechanics and story lines that need to be changed to make improvements to the user experience. Once the necessary modifications are made, test them again. When the pilot group is satisfied, the program is ready to launch.

Equally important as testing, is sufficient marketing internally – before, during and after the launch. You have already enlisted the help of a small group of your target players as testers. You may want to **call on these testers again to start spreading the good word about gamification** to create some excitement.

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Here are some other ideas for internal marketing:

- Formally **introduce gamification at an all-hands meeting**. Ask your executive sponsors to say a few words so that employees know that their leaders support the effort.
- **Send out a company-wide email** or e-newsletter with an introductory message about gamification from executive leaders.
- **Schedule a series of show and tell sessions to...**
 - ... Review the rules of the game. This will help with engagement from the start.
 - ... Provide instructions for customizing agents' and manager's personal dashboards.
 - ... Show agents how they can track their own progress and see how their performance compares with others.
 - ... Explain the various types of real-time feedback agents will receive.
- **Use social media** as part of your communications plan. You can explain the objectives of gamification and share information and timing of the rollout.
- **Reward employees for spreading the word prior to launch**. Also reward those who inspire others to play after the launch. Consider recognizing them with a special badge.
- **Ask for feedback** and do something with it so that employees know you value their input. Gamification is iterative. You will want to make modifications and improvements as goals and objectives change.
- After the launch, you may want to **send out short Gamification Tips** emails or post on social media. Encourage users to provide suggestions for tips and reward those who provide them.

Conclusion

ACHIEVING LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Gamification can be leveraged to **motivate and engage contact center employees long-term**. It is an effective onboarding and ongoing training solution for changing employee behavior to improve individual and company performance. But it was never meant to be a “develop once and be done” effort. To keep gamification fresh and relevant, usage and **the program itself must be constantly evaluated and updated**. As is true in general for any incentive or learning program with the **goal of changing employee behaviors** to improve individual and company performance, it is important to track what is working and what could work better and then make the ongoing changes necessary to keep things fresh.

ABOUT GAMIFICATION



We understand what motivates agents and supervisors — and we know that high employee motivation drives customer satisfaction. Utilizing intelligent game mechanics tailored to each client's spectrum of employees, our gamification solution maximizes your opportunity for success.

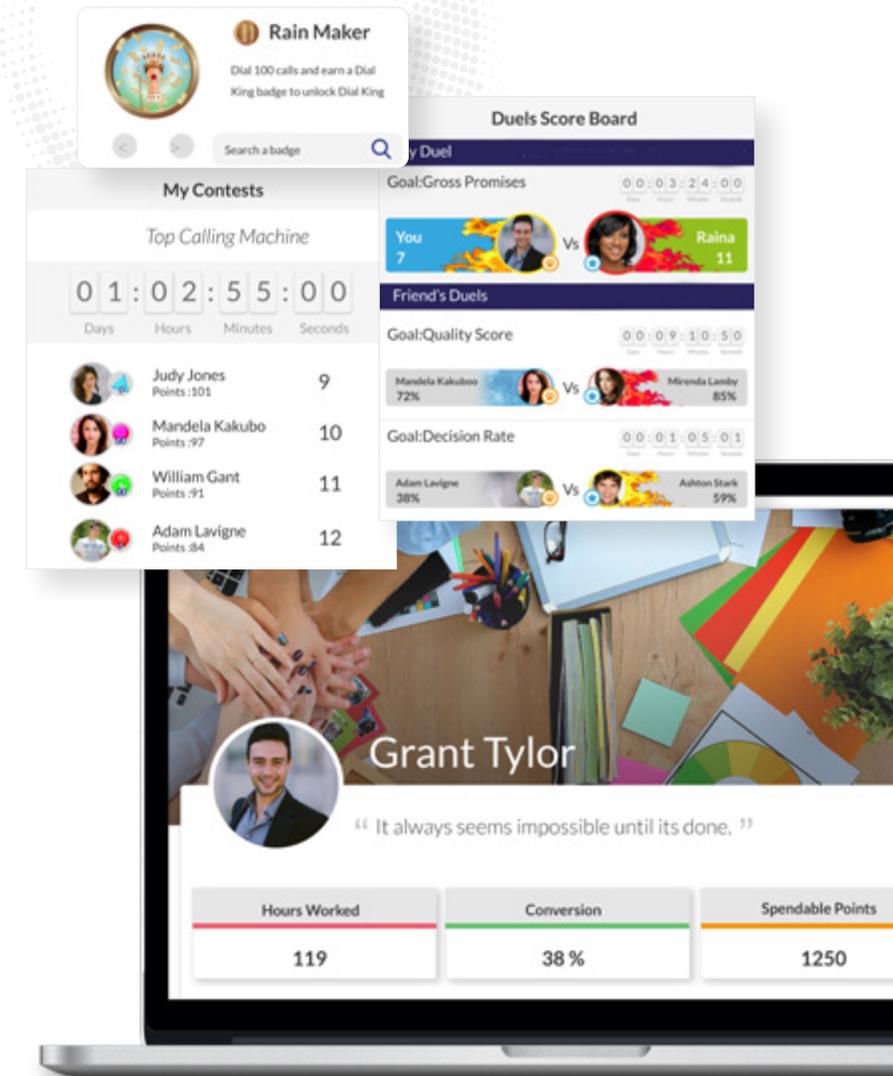
We leverage two types of motivation: intrinsic, personal desires to achieve and do well; and extrinsic, tangible rewards to drive desired outcomes. Tapping into both types of motivation allows a contact center to better satisfy employee needs and foster an environment of achievement.

With features that drive competition, rewards, goals, status, recognition, collaboration and learning/training, Our Gamification creates an intersection between company objectives and employee activity and enhances employee engagement. This results in improved agent retention, customer satisfaction and profitability.

Alvaria offers a truly unique solution — the only gamification platform that can be leveraged with a complete set of contact center, workforce engagement and analytics technologies, all from the same ecosystem. Gamification + workforce management can reduce turnover and absenteeism and increase schedule adherence. Gamification + omnichannel communications + interaction analytics allows you to focus on all top-line productivity results. Leveraging gamification with other Alvaria technologies enables you to target a multitude of behavior outcomes across the business activity spectrum. But if you'd like to use our Gamification with solutions from other providers, no problem — our gamification platform is easily integrated with most contact center systems.

Learn more about Alvaria Gamification:

[Alvaria.com/Gamification](https://www.alvaria.com/Gamification)



ABOUT ALVARIA

Alvaria™ was founded through the merger of Aspect Software and Noble Systems, technology leaders in Customer Experience (CX) and Workforce Engagement solutions. Our name is derived from Latin for “hives” – Nature’s perfect form for millions of years – bringing you solutions that are scalable, resilient and secure, with efficiency, speed and pinpoint accuracy. ALVARIA Reshaping Customer Experience™.

For more information, visit **www.alvaria.com**.

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