The Ultimate Guide to Gamifying Your Sales Team

Almost 90% of sales managers we surveyed said gamification had a positive impact on sales numbers and revenue. Learn how they're doing it inside.

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The Ultimate Guide to Gamifying your Sales Team

A Closer's Coffee Guide

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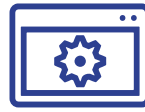
Austin Rolling, Christian Kladzyk, and Murat Yildirim

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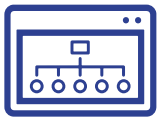### The Benefits

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CLOSER'S
COFFEE

Introduction

The sales role is a constantly evolving part of any business, and it's often tied to shifts in cultural dynamics of society at large. Scientific discoveries, technological trends, social norms, and even generational values all shape our expectations for how we should interact with someone looking to promote a good or service. While this idea is generally accepted as normal, it isn't always clear when those shifts in interaction are near. The companies that are able to quickly identify external forces influencing the progress of their sales teams foster positive relationships and typically stay among the top sales organizations.

Our mission at Outfield is to help organizations drive revenue and efficiencies in their sales operations by leveraging the power of data. We do this in a number of ways. Researching market trends and developing creative solutions in response to our findings is an example. And to further provide value to the marketplace, we like to share the results of our research in order to advance sales team productivity around the world.

This paper is centered on the utilization of gamification principles throughout the selling process. We'll touch on various topics to learn how they are impacting the sales role today versus in the past,

and whether or not that trend will continue. Based on the findings from our research, we attempt to answer questions pertaining to gamification effectiveness. Does it work? When should a sales team employ these principles and how?

For this study, we interviewed 100 seasoned sales professionals from various industries ranging from manufacturing, tech, to medical sales. Some had no exposure to the concept at all. However, most were familiar with some idea of driving sales performance by the implementation of games or contests.

In addition to learning more about utility and impact, we profoundly wanted to improve our understanding of character dynamics that can possibly foster results that were significant. For example, does age of the sales person matter in relation to employing gamification?

Here is the most relevant data that we collected from this study:

How familiar are you with sales gamification?

94% people from the survey said they were familiar and leveraged gamification techniques in their teams.

52%
Very

42%
Slightly

6%
Not at all
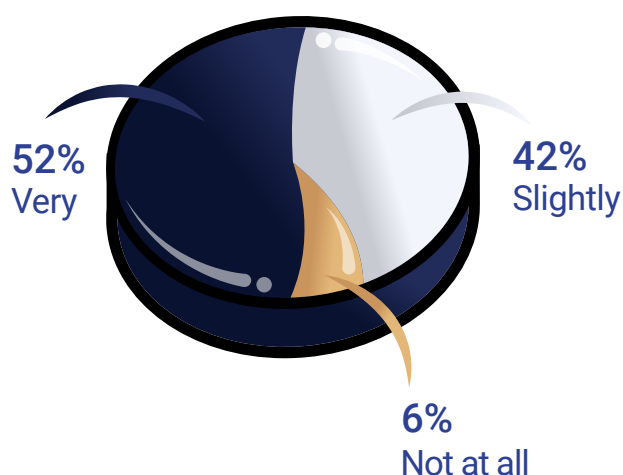
Age vs. Motivation

Our survey shows that people younger than 30 are more motivated when a game is involved in their sales process. Here's an explanation!
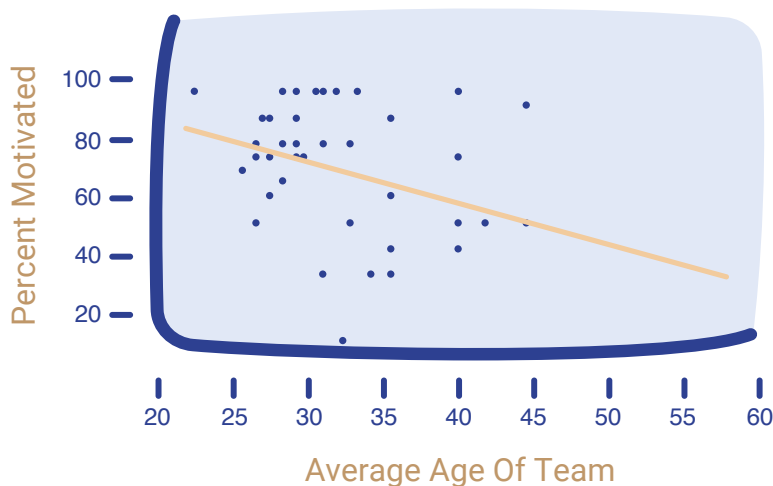
90%+

team members are more likely to be motivated by a game or contest.

Motivation over time

Team member's motivation in a contest/game increases over time.

40%+

of people surveyed mentioned some kind of leaderboard/ scoreboard to share the results of contest/games with team members.

20%

of sales manager mentioned CRM integration when we asked them future ideas about how to leverage technology.

Team Size vs. Motivation

also seems to have an impact on motivation. For teams of 25 members or less, people's motivation increases in a sales game/contest as team size increases. However, for teams that have more than 25 members, the responses were all over the place.
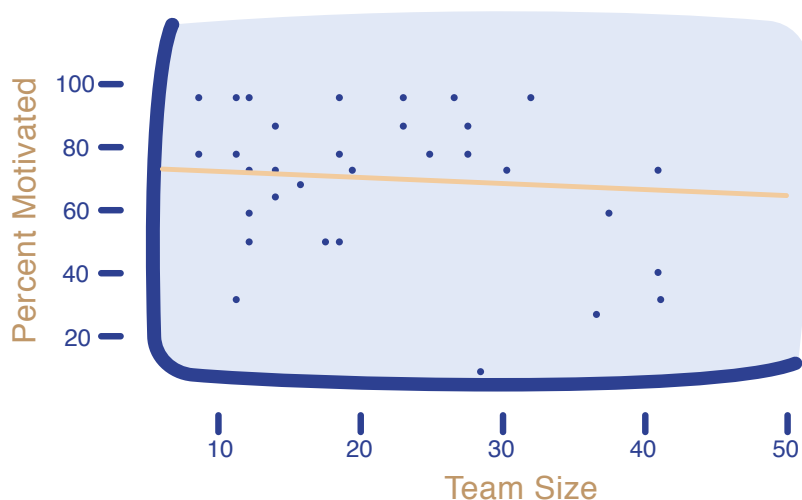
16%

of respondents mentioned that recognition alone was a significant incentive for their sales team. Of those responses, the average age of those teams was about 33.

53%

of sales managers responded yes to if gamification led to unhealthy competition within their sales teams.

So what is Gamification?

Gamification is the application of typical elements of game playing (e.g., point scoring, competition with others, rules of play) to other areas of activity, typically as an online marketing technique to encourage engagement with a product or service

gam·i·fi·ca·tion
/ˌgāmifəˈkāSHən/
noun

In sales, it is a term relatively new to the industry but a concept that has been in place for ages. Or as Diane Corrado of Wolters Kluwer Tax & Accounting says, "Nothing new.. Millennials gave it a new name and think they invented it." Something as simple as a whiteboard containing individual sales numbers for the month is an example. The board's transparency to the entire team can drive a level of competition among the reps due to its inherent comparison of one rep vs the others. The real question is should sales managers deliberately use this system as a tactic to drive performance?

Sales gamification is a debated practice among many sales organizations to say the least. One that is deemed unnecessary by

some under the pretense that one's career is enough motivation to perform at their full capabilities. Feeding your family should be enough of an incentive, right? Salespeople in particular are interesting beings. Maybe it's the copious amounts of coffee to get through long and draining days, but they are extremely high powered and competitive in nature (both with others and with themselves). So, with all this, we became extremely intrigued about one of the largest trends amongst sales teams and why it should matter to yours.

Companies all over are adopting gamification principles into the workflow operations of their sales team with pretty clear motives. These practices, many sales managers would argue, add some variety to ordinary everyday processes and encapsulates all the characteristics of a salesperson while drawing from their natural tendencies to create a system that not only drives performance, but can promote a stellar company culture.

As with the whiteboard we mentioned above, sales gamification doesn't have to be a complex system with points attributed to actions or multifaceted in any way. It can be as simple as a leaderboard. Why is that? Because the transparency in itself draws out characteristics that are capable of altering a salesperson's performance. For this reason, every industry and every position will have a unique perspective on what drives performance or what motivates their

team. We can make anything a game, but how can you as a sales professional maximize your efforts and take this new system to the next level?

Throughout this whitepaper, we will cover the benefits of applied gamification principles within your sales operations, key factors that are behind a successful gamification process, different methods of gamifying, the implications of these strategies, and potential negatives you should consider. Here's the catch: there's no right answer. Gamification is about realizing what works for you and your team and capitalizing on that knowledge. This whitepaper is designed to educate on the topic and dissect the many variations that may be successful for you so that you can make an informed decision on whether or not your team will benefit from participating in a gamified work-flow. If so, this paper will suggest different practices that you can implement to make the most of this growing trend. The underlying theme of all of this is leveraging motivation to drive performance. In order to fully understand this concept and your own team, you must be ready to question motivation and how that is impacting your company holistically.

The process of gamifying your sales operation is no simple task, however it possesses the power to transform your sales team into a purpose driven, high-powered selling machine.

The Benefits

Chapter 1

The Benefits of Applying a Gamified Experience to Your Sales Operations

Performance

Among the list of things that are consistent with high performing sales professionals all over the world, you'll find a need for accomplishment, desire for recognition, and an inherent competitive drive. On the other hand, being perceived as a slacker or not receiving due acknowledgment for a job well done can lead to self-devaluation and possibly long-term insecurities in a sales career

(which won't be a sales career for much longer if so). Pay is a byproduct, but in many cases, not the defining attribute responsible for top salespeople to be their best.

Great sales managers are aware of this, and use it to their advantage. By acknowledging an individual's special performances among the group and using those as opportunities to compare against the performances of others on the team. This has been a tactic used to boost overall performance for many, many years.

Proven to work by playing on intrinsic motivations associated with any red-blooded human being (i.e. narcissism, desire for respect, recognition, pride, etc.), contests are embraced in order to drive higher performance among sales reps by tapping into their competitive nature. The desire of being top-dog is a position that everyone enjoys during their stint as number 1, and it isn't a position they are quickly willing to give up even in the face of colleagues seeking to knock them off the throne. A sales manager's goal should be to take advantage of human nature in order to drive the company towards its objectives. One does this by doing the following:

- Setting goals for your individual reps against their personal bests and rewarding them accordingly.

- [Implementing Contests](#) centered on various aspects of daily operations where reps compete against their colleagues in delivering positive results. Because no one wants to be viewed as the weak link of their team, ego can be used to drive personnel performance. This extends itself into overall sales growth mainly because average performance metrics are lifted across the entire team.

This is where transparency comes in. Especially in the workforce, whenever one has personal goals and interests they are motivated by. Transparency, in practice, is the act of being open and honest about yourself, your pitfalls, and your successes. In these cases, transparency opens up doors to fully understanding what incentivizes your team. It also helps one to better understand their role in a complex organization by understanding where the rest of the team is and how they are or are not contributing.

Culture

Gamification has a profound effect on team culture. Of those that responded to implementing a form of gamification in their career, 95% of sales managers said that it had positively impacted their team culture and camaraderie within the organization. In a U.S. economy that loses more than $500 billion every year due to workplace stress (American Psychological Association), this is something that is more important than ever. A positive team culture is something that only you can define for your team, but it is something that can go beyond "having fun at work."

Impact of gamification

Almost 90% of sales managers we surveyed said gamification had a positive impact on sales numbers and revenue.

3%
Negative

8%
Not at all

89%
Positive
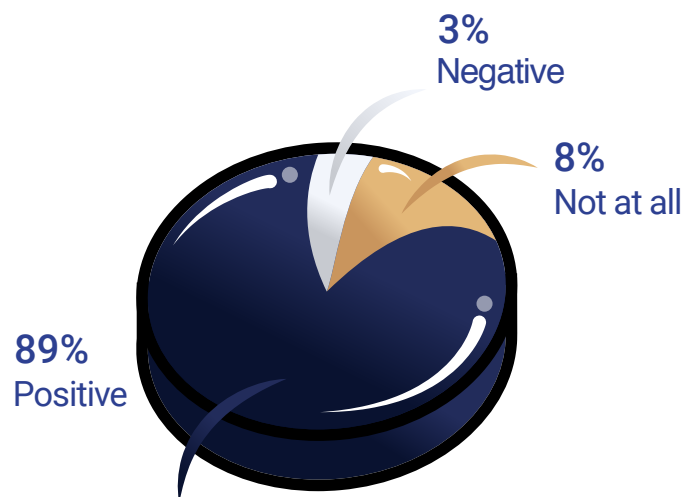
For many, the thought of a company culture is personified by casual work attire, snacks in the office, and maybe even scooters that will get you from one meeting to the next. Although appealing, your company perks do not define the actual team culture.

Positive team culture is moreover represented by characteristics such as comradery, lack of burnout, and the ability to continuously perform at a high level, regardless of the challenges ahead. Your team culture sets the tone for how your team works together, as well as how they manage hardships and accomplishments on their own.

The reason why gamification tends to drastically improve team cultures is because you set an expectation for the entire team, and challenge them to break new barriers in their sales career. Upon exceeding their goals, they are met with a token of recognition, physically or metaphorically marking their success. If done correctly, marking the success of one lays the groundwork for the successes of others on the team and it may domino into an unrelenting support for one another.

Program Attributes

Chapter 2

What defines a great gamification strategy?

Participants

Your sales rep's age, prior experience, and motivational forces are all factors that will impact the success of your gamification. In fact, our data showed that gamification was most successful with reps ranging from 21-35 years old. Because we thought this point was so important, we wrote a whole separate article titled 'Gamifying the Next Generation of Sales Reps.' You can find that piece [here](). Again, if you're hiring on a new team, ask questions early. If you're

implementing a new system with your existing team, set clear expectations and rationale behind your decision.

Transparency

Integrating games and contests into your sales process isn't necessarily all fun and… games. These practices carry an importance far greater than enjoyment in the workplace. If done right, gamification can establish a larger sense of purpose among your team.

Transparency is the openness and availability of all information to your team. This concept encourages every individual on a team to be vulnerable in both their work metrics and their overall purpose for succeeding in their role for the greater good of the company. Both are crucial to fostering success and can uncover motivations you haven't yet thought of. From a metrics standpoint, visible leaderboards are a prime example of instilling transparency throughout your organization. It is not a simple thing to do, and can turn many people off. Showcasing live scores may seem like it only recognizes top performers and exposes the flaws of low performers. That is why establishing a culture around continuous improvement is critical. In this case, being transparent about performance does not leave it up to the sales manager to correct the trajectory of a low performer.

It leaves it up to the team, or at least begs the question "How can I help?" or "What do you need to succeed?" Transparency when evaluating individual purpose and motivation behind one's job can also possess many benefits when developing gamification and determining the incentives that are going to shape your program. Individual transparency is educating yourself as a manager or the rest of your team about why someone is even in the role. What is driving them to be in the position they are in. Ultimately, money may not be the primary driver for many individuals. But you will never know that unless you ask the question.

Timeliness

Relevance is key whenever building something that will engage an audience and keep them attentive for a given period of time. The same is important for gamifying your sales process. Sports can be great examples for generating relevant game programs, especially because they're already coupled with competitive characteristics. Along with shared attributes, you have the ability to brand your contest in a way that sticks with the participants and is something they can take home and share with other colleagues and family. Here's what we mean. In March, it's much more fun to leave work and talk about how you mounted a "Cinderella story" comeback in your office's yearly March Madness sales bracket. You and your teammate closed 8 accounts in the last day to surpass the Seasoned Sailors in their quest for a repeat championship and

to advance to the next round against Team Tommy Boy. Not only does this create excitement and buzz, it plays off of what the rest of the world is keeping up with; the NCAA basketball tournament and its electricity. Outfield's CEO Austin Rolling has a wonderful article that details this kind of contest in detail [here](#).

The concept of timeliness and relevance doesn't just draw from professional sporting events. Think of popular culture in the form of television and video games. Matthew Graessle of AMC Theaters spoke to a game that drew inspiration from the new season of Survivor Island where reps were placed in "tribes", eliminated, and voted off the "island". The "see what happens next week" anticipation was felt both on television and in the real world. That is what timeliness can achieve within gamification: a seamless carryover of emotion between work and life.

Michael Drobnick at PGA Tour mentioned his use of gamification in downtimes or holidays. Especially in the golfing industry, it's easy to have a slow day in the winter when there is not typically a lot of activity. Recognizing patterns of low activity can play a large role in re-engaging your teams when they may think it's normal to experience lower revenue, call volumes, etc.

Legality/Rules

The rules of engagement should be transparent to all parties. Especially when scaling your programs to account for larger teams or multiple branches, ensure you take the time to document rules and regulations to avoid potential point manipulation or a misunderstanding of goals.

If set rules don't abide with the culture you are trying to achieve from implementing gamification, take time to set expectations for what you hope reps can achieve and where you hope to significantly impact the company. You may be aiming to train inexperienced salespeople or hit a 10% increase in sales for the quarter. Each goal requires a different approach from the start and should be stated as so.

Most importantly, rules need to be fair. This seems like an obvious point to make but you'd be surprised how often managers mistakenly put rules in place that inherently builds in an advantage for one group over the other. Take for example contests that are focused solely on top line revenue generation. At face value this seems like a legit KPI to build a contest around, but in the event that reps have different markets (some with higher volume potential than others), it could present a huge bias. For example, imagine a rep whose territory is New York vs. one with the Austin market.

Depending upon the product/service, this can be perceived as an unfair contest among your reps. One way to neutralize a situation like this is to add a variety of KPIs diversifying the contributing factors that lead to victory. Another is to normalize, which takes into account the characteristics that make one market different than another. Basing rules upon percentage gain rather than absolute revenue numbers could do the trick.

This is a perfect segway into our next topic - Goals.

Goals

Measured KPIs should be attainable. Even if you're setting outlandish goals, have a measurable action plan in place that highlights a successful scenario in order to increase buy in from reps.

What KPIs are you tracking? Are they attainable? Is there a substantial reward in place once the goal is met? The following are examples of KPIs that you can track within your organization.

- New Accounts
- Referrals
- Retention
- Meetings set
- Proposals sent

- Call volume
- Demos Given
- Units moved
- Talk time
- Booking percentage

Imagine this

You realize that your discovery-to-demo conversions are down 15% from last month. You decide that, in order to combat this, you will implement an incentive for reps once they reach 30 demo conversions in the month. Everyone that reaches 30 demo conversions will receive a $100 gift card to the restaurant of their choice. Using a software integration, you set up a dashboard with everyone's progress bar for the given goal. For some, this metric may seem out of reach, however once those individuals begin to note their peer's performance, their perception of the game and the goal shifts to something more attainable

Before you set any quantifiable goals, revisit your company values to ensure that you're not overlooking the quality of service that you offer to your customers. Too much of a focus on hitting numbers may lead to the compromising on customer relationships.

Prize

Have some reward that victors can receive in order to incentivize participants along the way. Later, I'll speak on the importance of actually knowing your team, understanding what incentivizes them and that this is not a one size fits all concept. However, the following are great places to start, especially if you're working with a large sales team or new team that you're just getting to know.

- **Cash -** The real king!
- **Paid Time Off** - A recent study by Gallup states that over two-thirds of workers have experienced burnout at work. Incentivizing time off is not only appealing, it's a critical draw for fully functioning teams.

- **Half Days** - For those with strong family values, a half day could mean spending more time with their children. It could also create time to run those mid-day errands they've had trouble getting around to.

- **Dinners (with team, with spouses)** - An Oxford study showed that 76% of people thought eating together was a good way of bringing people closer together. Whether it be you and your team or your team and their families, closer relationships lead to better mental health and better minds equipped to handle rigorous days on the phone or in the field.

- **Recognition (a medal or trophy of sorts, inclusion on staff newsletter, etc)** - Some of us began this research with the hypothesis that more seasoned teams would be less keen on recognition and more driven by monetary incentives, contrary to greener, less experienced sales reps. 16% of respondents mentioned that recognition alone was a significant incentive for their sales team. Of those responses, the average age of those teams was about 33 years old.

- **Raffle Entry, Spin the Wheel opportunity** - Raffles or bonus prizes incorporating chance, can be an incentive at a lower level and not necessarily for large opportunities. Ex. For each meeting you set, you get one entry into a raffle for a television. This concept gives everyone a chance at a prize, regardless of skill. The playing field is slightly more even.

- **Trips** - Dale Dupree, a Sales Manager in consumer goods, noted one of the best incentives that he had received was a company trip to Vancouver. He mentioned that the difference of this trip from others was that the reps were asked in a survey where they preferred to go at the end of the year and what they wanted to do while on the trip. This method was successful in bringing the team together and creating dialogue around what truly mattered to them in an incentive. He said, "After we had those conversations, it was

a completely different scenario where everybody made that trip because there was an extra effort to make it everyone's trip. Once people had skin in the game, there were talks about group discounts for activities such as four-wheeling and there was a new goal to accomplish getting there together."

As stated earlier, there is no clear-cut reward that works best. As enticing as cash sounds, the occasional work-from-home day might be all your reps need to come back to the office refreshed or perhaps a mental break from the daily grind. Later, we'll speak to the importance of incentives and examples of how you can shape them to reflect your team culture.

Enjoyment

The contest program should be fun and inspire the best behaviors from your employees. This might be the most important feature for proper engagement and team morale.

Without enjoyment, you may as well stick to commission based motivation. In this day and age, as much as money can be a motivator, money can be the reason that your star reps leave your team. In that event, your team is only worth as much as you have in the bank, and not what they're able to bring in for years to come.

An enjoyable game may stem from timeliness or it may stem from a manager's silliness. Don't be afraid to get creative and draw from past games you may have played as a child. Don't be afraid to brand your gamification around something that creates nostalgia. The more you are able to distance the concept from traditional "sales", the less it will feel like work.
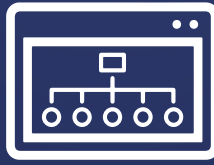
Program Structure

Chapter 3

> *"Structures differ greatly. You usually start by mining the numbers. Determine what numbers matter most, identifying where the opportunities are, then designing a game that satisfies the issue."*

Matthew Graeslle of AMC Theaters

Engagement

Engagement may be thought to be dependant on longevity of a program, but it begins far before your contests are even launched. One of the most common issues sales managers were having with their reps once implementing a gamification program was that they failed to remain engaged once they knew that they did not have a chance of winning a prize or being recognized. Here are some quick tips for keeping your reps engaged throughout your gamification efforts.

- Put them in teams - Pair them up with another rep that can provide that competitive edge or motivational spark. This is also a great way of installing additional accountability, as members are responsible to their teammates for achieving success.

- Daily mini games - set a goal that can be hit before the end of the day. Doing this may also create a level playing field for those who have been left behind in a longer contest

- Provide constant updates - Don't let reps lose sight of where they stand compared to their peers and how much they have or haven't progressed

Games vs Contests

A majority of what we see industry-wide is some sort of structure in which individuals or teams that perform at the highest level receive an incentive. This structure clearly draws from a salesperson's competitive nature and rewards against the rest of the pack. However, when examining your team, you may find many Type-A personalities clashing against each other, so much so that a competition may add a level of angst to your working environment.

A solution to rewarding against one another is rewarding against one's self and removing the competitive aspect as a whole. Assigning points to actions and rewarding based on a progress basis is another method of gamifying your sales process that can add transparency and creativity to your sales process. Unlike having specified winners and losers, this system highlights internal goals and rewards individuals that bet on themselves instead of against others.

Because this is something that is used less frequently, it is easy to forget that transparency is one of the key facets that allows gamification to be a useful tool for your organization. Ensure that your reps' performance is visible to one another although you are not encouraging reps to surpass their peers. When you set the key metrics that are important to your rep's success and set goals

around those, understand that with this visibility, each individual can clearly understand how their peers are performing as well as the organization as a whole. One manager who uses games and points as a way of motivating described their process as one that incentivizes collaboration and creativity. By assigning points or bounties to individuals that team up with colleagues creates a culture where individuals do not feel alone with their numbers. Similar assignments to discovering news ways to conduct follow-ups supports constant change.

How sales teams are currently gamifying

- **Best rep wins** - Top performer receives a reward
- **Raffle** - All performers that reach or surpass a given mark are entered into a raffle or drawing for a prize
- **Team vs Team** - Break up the group into two separate teams, each working to hit a target first collectively. This method could also work between regional offices. A larger scale example of this is using a March Madness sales bracket. [Click here](#) to learn about this contest.
- **Team vs Boss** - A sales team working collectively to hit one target, in turn earning a reward from upper management
- **1 v 1** - Typically a micro-contest based on one metric with smaller prizes.

Contest length

A revolving topic around gamification is the length of which a given program should run. With engagement as the largest attribute to a successful gamification program, longevity should be a key consideration. Attention is the most precious resource. In this case, your sales reps attention to a particular incentive diminishes over time, especially if only the top 1% of your team is working more quickly than the bottom 99%. If the bottom 99% sees no successful end in sight, what's to encourage them to adhere to a contest?

A quarterly contest seems most common, because it ties together with a standard company timeline and encourages strong performance throughout an entire 3-month timespan. However, the longevity associated with this could leave some prone to being discouraged as soon as a clear frontrunner emerges.

A weekly or daily structure emphasizes quick improvements in specific metrics or KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). The brevity of these contests eliminate the chance of one individual jumping too far ahead and in turn, create a general (or perceived) fairness for the competition. Everyone feels as if they have a chance if 1 week of uninterrupted, quality work is all it takes to achieve 1st place and receive an incentive.

In noting which contest length works best for your team, also realize that there must be consistency in your practice if you want your sales growth to remain consistent. A common subject of conversation was the subsequent results that followed one-time gamification efforts. Following 4-6 months of the inception of the process, performance leveled out again. This emphasizes a larger point. If you are looking into bringing gamification concepts into your sales team, you must create a plan that incorporates multiple competitions throughout the year, each with its own purpose and format. If not, your reps may be subject to losing interest in the same repetitive prize.

Incentives

Chapter 4

What is the ultimate reward when gamifying your sales process? Well, it depends who you ask. Some may say it is the all-inclusive paid trip to Las Vegas. Others may only look forward to their commission check. We tend to think of rewards as solely tangible. They are handed to us each time we complete a task or reach a milestone. Within gamification, the reward structure is more complex than you think, with benefits for both the sales rep and the organization as a whole.

Knowing your team is essential to generating the right incentives.

For clarification, we don't mean the ability to rattle off their name and what they drive. You must know what drives them. Understanding their motives behind why they want to be successful or make money in their role. In an interview we had with Bill Keeler, President of Market Makers, he described a story in which he came to learn that one of his employee's primary drivers was supporting her kids and working to spend more time with them. As a result, Bill incentivized her success with paid time off so she could spend more time with who mattered to her most.

Knowing your team presents new ideas around what energizes them. As money-motivated as the sales profession can be, cash payouts will not always be the answer. Every sales leader should have this conversation with members of their team. What's driving them daily? Why are they here? How do they view success in the short term and long-term? These are critical questions that can shape your gamification system and moreover your team culture.

Here are some of our favorite examples where sales managers created contests around drivers such as recognition, internal growth, relieving frustration, and fostering an enjoyable team environment. Sometimes, a spiff will not relieve other frustrations that are attributing to a sales rep's distractions.

Paper Plates – A decorated paper plate is awarded to the top performer of each month. Huh? Sometimes, it's the silly things in life that propel us to be our best selves.

Water Dunking CFO – Everyone hates the CFO, right? No flexibility on price, limiting what you can achieve in a common month. Well take that hate and turn it into a release of frustration. Once a year, this company sets a quota. If that quota is met by all individuals on the team, something happens to the CFO. In this case, they're dunked in water over 100 times by the entire sales team.

Lunch With VP – Go ahead and order the lobster and scallops… maybe a nice glass of wine too. Oh yeah, and valuable insights from an experienced executive.

CEO For a Day – With great power comes great responsibility… or pretzel day for all.

Bob Ross Portrait – Framed picture of your face on Bob Ross while painting because, why not.

Serve Wine – In a 2-team battle, the losing side must serve a wine tasting to the winning side

Watch Winners Eat – In a 2-team battle, the winning team is treated to a steak dinner. The losing team also goes…and watches.

These are just a few examples of using emotion as an incentive for your games and contests. As you can gather, some of these aren't the most valuable, but they give reps something to look forward to over a given period of time. Interestingly enough, 16% of the interview participants said that one of their primary incentives was recognition, whether on a team newsletter or hanging picture. Each included having teams with an average age at or below 30... and it works for them. Similarly, 44% of participants mentioned a PTO day or trip program as an incentive, noting the importance of work-life balance.

Reality of Knowing Your Team

Frankly, not every individual will ever be fully bought in on making a game out of their work. Getting to know key players on your team may lead you to learn that these individuals are motivated by providing for themselves or their families and only that. And that's okay. If you come across individuals like this or have an entire team that would not gravitate towards this added element, don't exert unnecessary energy in changing that culture. If your team is one of the 14% that suggests less than half of their team is motivated by the games, it's time to reevaluate. As much as one would like to

think a well employed game is the solution, sometimes understanding your team dynamic on a deeper level is all you need to know.

The Potential Negatives

Chapter 5

When done right, gamification can bring great value to your team culture and even your bottom line. When not, you may be facing consequences detrimental to your company. The following are among the most common issues that an organization can experience when gamifying their sales team and how to minimize risk.

- **Cheating**
  - Like all games, there will always be individuals that try to game your system and take advantage of faults in your process. After all, the success of these games is in large part attributed to the honesty and accountability of those competing. If you see that reps are reporting false numbers, make sure you address it right away. If there are any variables that can be tracked automatically (time on call, calls made, etc) see if there is an export option for this data that can act as a cross-reference for the data.

- **Unattainable Goals**
  - One of the most common gripes of a rep who has gone through countless contests is that the goals set in place are often unattainable. Yes, managers do overestimate the capabilities of their reps at times, or maybe they are desperate to see dramatic improvements within their teams.
  - Setting metrics that are almost impossible to reach may discourage reps from the start and can ruin your gamification efforts. Moreover, reps may lose the confidence to overachieve because they were never given the chance.
  - It's possible you may have one all-star rep on your team that can't help but win every competition, never giving anyone else a chance. Try giving your top performer control of how the competition is run and let others compete for 1st place.

- **Timing: Holding Back**

  - Diane Corrado, who was mentioned earlier, spoke to a "fast start" program she held for her 600+ reps at the beginning of each quarter. "You train their behavior to hold something back so they can win something in January." In other words, there is a fine line between predictability and consistency. One must be wary of creating a program that incentivizes reps to align their efforts with occasional prizes and discourages production at the same level when a program is not running.

- **Over-Competitiveness**

  - Possibly one of the most common negative outcomes of gamifying a process is creating an atmosphere that overstimulates a salesperson's most important character trait. In our study, 53% of sales managers responded yes to if gamification led to unhealthy competition within their sales teams. Over-competitiveness will be hard to avoid and is something that begins from the hiring process. Mitigating it, however, is very feasible and requires adequate expectation setting before every contest that is presented.

- **Product Focus Over Value Focus**

  - Those who mindlessly implement gamification may be making the mistake of overvaluing the return on quantity over quality. By getting lost in producing a high amount of calls, meetings, or talk time, you may encourage reps to simply "go through the motions" and lose sight of closing and retaining clients long term.

Final Thoughts

The biggest thing when employing gamified experiences among your team is to consider the overall outcome you're aiming for and to protect against unintended consequences – the bad behaviors that can manifest themselves. Additionally, be mindful of the program attributes and structures that impact the success of your program.

Mold Your Team Around Gamification

If you're just starting your sales team or hiring new members to your team, it may be wise to hire based on the characteristics it takes to thrive in a competitive environment. If gamification practices are something you intend to employ consistently, then you want your team constantly engaged. Make sure that your hiring process begins with the end in mind. A culture fit becomes immensely more important whenever you begin implementing these new processes among your sales team.

By taking note of this change early, you are able to tackle the largest variable first: whether your team will be sold on this idea or not. Question motivation early. Question one's ability to face conflict. Will your next hire have their own self-interest as a priority, or will they raise up everyone around them?

The success of your gamification efforts is attributed to more than just the implemented structure. It relies on the team that it's impacting and their motivation to perform well in the role.

"It Depends"

Unfortunately, with gamification, there is no right answer. There is no magic wand that can be waved to boost your team's motivation. Frankly, if all was perfect in the world, gamification wouldn't be needed, and all your reps would be selling at their maximum threshold. But likely that is not happening. For this reason, we continued hearing those two words that indicate the variability in what managers are trying to achieve; "it depends."

The success of gamification depends on many factors, some of which you will never understand unless you trial some techniques. As mentioned, the program's structure and attributes, along with its incentives are among the top factors determining execution and success.

The Sales Manager's Dilemma

In our experience speaking with various sales leaders, the most interesting subject has been that of who has no liking for the concept of gamification but still understand that it is a strategy worth implementing. As the culture of their team shifts,

they must be adaptable and recognize the underlying motivation behind their team's successes. Office culture has shifted to one with a primary focus on personal-purpose, work-life balance, and perks that not only incentivize teams to work harder, but encourage them to stay around.

Conclusion

However you may feel about games or contests in a professional setting, you must know that creating and sustaining a successful sales team takes plenty of time and effort. The notion that money is the only motivator for sales is a concept of the past and must be taken with a grain of salt. Gamification is the medium in which you can create a team culture that draws from a salesperson's natural competitive tendencies and fosters growth, teamwork, and a clear representation of progress throughout your company. Gamification is here to stay. Across industries, managers are adopting new, innovative ways of connecting culture with bottom lines and reshaping how we think about our metrics. Once you fully recognize why your team wakes up in the morning and structure a program around those goals, your organization could reap the rewards for years to come. You may also come to wish you were a sales rep again, eager for every new challenge that presented itself… but only time will tell.

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