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# Businesses can benefit by using "gamification" techniques, according to study

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New research from Simon Fraser University's Beedie School of Business reveals that businesses could benefit from unprecedented levels of consumer and employee engagement by turning traditional processes into game-like experiences.

The research examines the phenomenon of "gamification," or applying game design principles in non-gaming contexts.

It breaks down the principles of gaming to see how they might be applied to other aspects of life, whether in business, academia or even civic responsibility.

The paper, "Is it all a game? Understanding the principles of gamification," was published in July by *Business Horizons*. Its co-authors include SFU Beedie researchers Ian McCarthy, Jan H. Kietzmann, Leyland Pitt and Karen Robson, as well as former Beedie PhD student Kirk Plangger, now of King's College, London.

The study describes the constituent parts of gamification—what the researchers call the mechanics, dynamics and emotions (MDE) using examples such as poker and the games Call of Duty and American Idol.

It defines mechanics as "the goals, the rules, the setting, the context, the types of interactions and the boundaries… of the situation to be

gamified."

The dynamics of the game relate to whether players need to cooperate, bluff or compete one-on-one.

Emotions are the states and reactions felt among players during the gamified experience.

McCarthy says gamification principles and strategies, once understood and applied, can be used to engage people outside of the game sphere, whether as consumers, students or employees.

This is especially relevant given that digital technologies and social media have advanced the process of engagement and communication.

Through these platforms, businesses and institutions are now able to turn traditional processes into deeper, more engaging game-like experiences for their customers and employees.

The next step in McCarthy's research is to establish a working model of a combination of MDE that will result in desired outcomes, depending on the goal.

"We should be able to describe successes and failures so we can say 'they had the wrong blend there, they had the right blend here'," says McCarthy.

"Ultimately, the goal is having a framework to think about design and predict performance outcomes and business success."

**More information:** "Is it all a game? Understanding the principles of gamification," *Business Horizons*, Volume 58, Issue 4, July–August 2015, Pages 411-420, ISSN 0007-6813, DOI: 10.1016/j.bushor.2015.03.006

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