The concept and practice of using challenges and reward levels to engage people has been around for years. Many customer-facing organizations like airlines, retailers and credit card companies use reward programs to build brand loyalty and incentivize repeat business. Now the market is taking this a step further by packaging gamification solutions, giving companies a framework, development environment and tools to create custom programs that differentiate the organization for employees and customers alike.

The emerging gamification solutions are being designed to engage employees and customers using game mechanics, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, and recognition rooted in the principles of behavioral science to drive desired outcomes. These new applications are growing in popularity and are being incorporated into internal production environments and customer-facing websites to engage and retain personnel and customers.

Gamification in the contact center:

Gamification solutions empower employees by giving them visibility into their performance, with tools and the means to make self-directed improvements and sustainable changes (thereby improving the experience they deliver to customers). Gamification is ideal for staff-intensive environments and operating areas in both front- and back-offices, and it's especially valuable for helping to capture and retain an increasingly Millennial workforce. Challenges, tasks, activities and quests are designed to motivate staff, "level-up" performance and tie into important key performance indicators (KPIs). Many of these solutions come with internal social media communities that promote collaboration and friendly competition while also providing a welcome diversion that supports departmental goals and enhances the customer experience.

A growing number of contact center requests for proposals (RFPs) for workforce optimization (WFO) solutions are asking vendors if they offer gamification functionality. These capabilities are a logical fit for WFO suites, and many of the leading and contending WFO suite providers have already incorporated, or are planning to incorporate, gamification modules into their solutions. Ultimately, gamification tools will be used to make findings from performance management, quality assurance, workforce management and surveying solutions more actionable for contact center leadership.

Gamification for customers:

Building on today's ubiquitous game addictions (think: Angry Birds and Candy Crush), customer-focused companies are employing game mechanics to promote customer engagement, driving participation in online community sites and encouraging active "(out loud)" brand loyalty. By making routine customer activities fun and even competitive, companies can not only improve customer satisfaction, but also get customers to take certain actions themselves without requiring assistance from costly agents and employees. Gamification is being used for things like on-boarding, product registration, assembly instructions, tutorials, frequently asked questions, and more. By rewarding customers for handling these actions on their own, companies are seeing growing traffic in the self-service portions of their websites as customers look for additional ways to earn points and achieve higher status levels in the game.

Over the next 18-24 months, it is expected to see substantial research and development (R&D) investments in the area of gamification. During this period of active innovation, prospects should take the opportunity to share their specific requirements with vendors. When a market is new, vendors often race to get their solutions to market, but welcome ideas to enhance them.

Although most of the demand is currently being seen in the US, it is expected interest in gamification functionality to grow quickly across other geographies. Contact center vendors will continue to incorporate gaming techniques into their solutions through internal development, partnerships and/or acquisitions. As the gamification sector matures and the applications themselves become more robust and easier to use, it is anticipated they will generate data and analytics that will be used to develop more personalized motivational tools for employees and customers.

This report covers emerging contact center trends and IT sectors that are likely to have a lasting impact on the market. Coverage is initiated early to help end-user organizations understand emerging solutions and
provide information that aids proper solution identification and acquisition. The 2014 – 2015 Gamification Product and Market Report is the only in-depth analysis of the gamification market. This timely and thorough guide analyzes six vendors that provide gamification solutions to contact centers, although a few of these solutions are designed for broader use. The five vendors covered in detail are: Badgeville, Bunchball, ClearView, PlayVox and Snowfly. nGUVU, with a solution expected to be released in January 2015, is covered at a higher level.

Report Highlights

- Gamification has the potential to take employee and customer loyalty to a whole new level: The concept of earning points and status with customer-facing brands has existed for quite some time. For the first time, vendors are offering packaged gaming solutions that provide a framework, development environment and tools that allow companies to truly differentiate themselves to both their own employees and their customers.
- Gamification solutions empower employees and reduce churn: Rooted in behavioral science, gaming tools promote collaboration and friendly competition among workers through creative challenges and quests. These applications empower employees with tools to improve performance, enhance the customer experience they deliver, gain recognition and better meet KPIs – all of which leads to higher job satisfaction, reduced operating costs and an improved bottom line.
- Customers love a good challenge: Gaming is rampant. Companies are leveraging this gaming addiction to drive increased engagement and brand loyalty through contests and rewards. Although gamification is still in its early stage, all signs indicate user companies are experiencing the desired outcomes these solutions purport to provide.
- This market is new and will grow quickly: Gamification solutions are in their infancy, and interest is mainly being seen in the US. It is expected interest to grow around the globe, and for WFO suite providers and many other vendor categories to incorporate this helpful and practical functionality into their solutions as demand increases.

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