

LEVEL

UP



## Want to engage your employees in wellness? Learn from the gaming world and make it fun.

It wasn't too long ago that most digital gaming happened on the latest console in our rec rooms. But times have changed. From collecting reward points when we purchase items to playing social media game apps on our mobile devices, digital gaming has come out of the basement and moved into almost every facet of our lives—including the workplace.

Leaderboards, reward points, reaching new levels and combatting digital villains are all being adopted by a variety of

industries to engage customers and employees. Foursquare has been awarding badges and ranking users for location check-ins since 2009. IBM Connections offers a whole network of products for members to accomplish goals, gain status and earn rewards.

It's a fast-growing trend known as gamification, in which elements of game design are used in a non-gaming setting to motivate employees and engage customers. As this trend becomes more common, *now* is the time to evaluate how it can positively influence employee health.

### Tip #1: Get in the Game

According to IT researcher Gartner, by the end of 2014, about 70% of *Forbes'* Global 2000 list of businesses will manage at least one gamified application or system, and, by 2015, about one-quarter of redesigned business processes will be based on gamification. According to M2 Research, the gamification market is expected to grow to \$2.8 billion by 2016.

The corporate world is clearly on board—and for good reason. Case studies show that gamification can have a big impact on productivity, training and engagement. Companies such as Spotify and LivingSocial have introduced new annual review formats with a mobile, gamified approach, with more than 90% of employees taking the time to participate, according to a 2013 *Huffington Post* article. And, according to a 2013 *Forbes* article, Deloitte's gamified leadership training program now takes senior executives 50% less time to complete.

Employee and customer apps take on a whole new dimension when lessons and tasks are integrated with opportunities to compete, share accomplishments and earn rewards. It's this type of setup that can motivate people to keep coming back and can even change behaviour.

Gamification has also emerged as a driver in health and wellness. Many apps allow users to challenge others to fitness or weight-loss contests and share their results within a digital community. For example, Nike has had success with introducing a sports watch and app that allows runners to track, share and challenge fellow athletes across the globe. And Apple is expected to move into the fitness- and health-tracking world

sometime this year with its new Healthbook initiative.

### Tip #2: Choose the Right Platform

Big business is investing more in gamified wellness because these types of solutions have proven to be successful in keeping users engaged. Elements such as attainable challenges, identified milestones, rewards, and sharing and recording achievements keep the “gamer” motivated and more likely to stick with the activity. In the long run, such applications can support users in adopting new behaviours and, ultimately, in reaching or maintaining their health and wellness goals. The app becomes part of the user's wellness lifestyle.

In the 2013 *sanofi Canada Healthcare Survey*, 91% of plan sponsors felt they should be doing more in the area of disease prevention rather than just supporting treatment. In Canada, three out of five people over age 20 live with a chronic disease, and four out of five are at risk, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada. But many chronic diseases can be prevented through healthy lifestyle choices.

Prevention can have a major impact on employee health and benefits plan

gamification to improve wellness, employers can integrate existing resources to support their wellness strategy and increase employee engagement. Insurers can also play a role by integrating, or even designing, gamified wellness platforms and products as part of their value-added benefits plan offerings.

However, while gamification has the potential to better engage employees and improve their health, it's important to ensure that it's there to support their wellness needs and not simply because it's the latest trend. As with all business decisions, a gamified approach to health improvement should be integrated with an organization's overall goals. Its purpose should be to actively address leading health and wellness issues that affect the organization.

If gamification stops at achieving individual goals, it won't remain compelling for long. An extra element is needed to make gamification attractive over the long term: competition. Making the platform social is important. Key elements that keep game users engaged are the opportunity to join a team or group, competition with others and sharing accomplishments.

When it comes to improving the health and wellness of employees, the benefits

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affordability—yet, when it comes to effectively engaging employees in prevention and intervention, employers often struggle with the right tools and approaches. Adopting gamification as part of an organization's overall wellness strategy may be part of the solution. For example, Medavie Blue Cross incentivizes employees to complete an interactive online health risk assessment, which includes functions for them to set goals and track progress. To engage employees further, there is also a fitness tracking device as a reward.

### Tip #3: Make it Multiplayer

With the popularity and abundance of apps and online sites using elements of

industry is realizing the potential impact that gamification can have on benefits plan management. Engaging employees and improving health is one facet, but today's wellness platforms have the capability to do much more.

Game elements such as badges, rewards and a record of achievement can not only motivate employees but also help employers measure effectiveness and return on investment, bringing employee wellness support and insights from data to a whole new level.

Is your organization up to the challenge? Game on!