

Has

# GAMIFICATION REACHED IT'S PEAK?

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Over the course of my career I have sometimes found myself with the frustration that some of the best ideas I've had just aren't plausible. It lead me to realize that even though we are reaching the year 2020, a date that just screams FUTURE to me, we are still far away from truly living in a digital environment. But what does that has to do with gamification?

At the end of the day, all gamification systems have rules tied to actions within them. Do action X, get reward Y. But how do we prove that X ever happened? The most common gamification systems that interact with the real world, the well known „point based loyalty systems“, always have a digital verification. Drive up to the gas station, pay for the fuel and collect reward points. There's no cheating the system here - the sale happened 100% guaranteed. But what if I wanted to incentivize something other than a sale? An action that wouldn't be as easy to verify?

Imagine I wanted to create a mini game to teach people how to use a gas pump. Besides giving them guidance, there is no way I can give feedback if they've chosen the wrong or the right fuel type. It's all based on good faith. There's no chip in the car that checks the fuel type, no chip in the gas pump that communicates with my phone and tells me I messed up. Our systems aren't just quite there yet.

Let's take an example from the game world. If you were to play a roleplaying game - assume that you're a mystical wizard - and you'd cast a lightning spell on an enemy, the game could deliver you all the feedback you could ever wish for. How close you hit to the target, how much damage it dealt, how long it took you to aim my spell,

how long it took for the cloud to show up to deliver the lightning. Without getting too bizarre here we can quickly realize that no matter what information the game decides to share with the player, the game knows everything that happened and everything that didn't happen. It's omniscient.

A true virtual world has full control over data and in turn gains the ability to give us feedback on absolutely everything. Even in a time of ever growing data streams, the real world doesn't quite come close to offering us that luxury. It's very difficult to attach rules and game systems to actions you can't even measure. It's like playing tennis without a racket or ball, where both parties verbally agree that they've hit the ball back and forth. Would you be willing to pay a prize to the winner of this tennis match? Of course not.

The better the digital infrastructure, the better the possibilities for play. Gamification has been around for roughly a decade now but I expect the membrane between games and reality to become increasingly thinner. As our cities get smarter and our sensors become more sophisticated, gamification will grow to unlock its true potentials with the ever increasing ways to verify our actions. Just keep in mind that it's only a game if we do it voluntarily.

