



# Using Gamification to Improve Contact Center Performance

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# Using Gamification to Improve Contact Center Performance

Gamification is an innovation that has quickly attracted a large and loyal following because of its proven ability to improve engagement.

Despite its rapidly growing adoption, gamification is frequently misunderstood and mischaracterized as a consumer marketing technique. In fact, the use cases and benefits are much broader.

Consider: the use of gamification in sales operations is forecast to triple between 2016 and 2017<sup>1</sup>; Gartner previously said 50 percent of corporate processes would be gamified, and that 40 percent of Global 1000 organizations would use gamification to support their business transformation strategies.<sup>2</sup> Gamification has proven especially effective at improving employee performance and business results at contact centers.

Benefits include increased revenues from higher sales/collections close rates, improved compliance, faster employee onboarding by making training more fun and effective, and improved employee retention. When contact center agents are more engaged at work, enterprises can optimize engagement with customers.

Businesses are winning with gamification, but the process isn't all fun and games. Gamification programs need to be driven by business goals and backed by accurate, objective data and metrics – you can't have a fair game if you can't keep score.

That is why interaction analytics are an essential component of contact center gamification programs, and why gamification is a natural step for organizations that already have interaction analytics in place. Contact center analytics serve as the scorekeeper and referee that makes gamification successful.

This white paper gives examples of how organizations have used gamification in contact centers and presents best practices for using gamification to improve contact center performance.



1. Enterprise Gamification Consultancy "The Current Market of Gamification Sales Platform" April 26, 2016  
2. <https://elearningindustry.com/top-gamification-statistics-and-facts-for-2015>

## What is Gamification?

A simple, useful definition for “gamification” is the application of game mechanics to non-game environments. “Mechanics” refers to how the game is structured, for example the rules of play, how points/scores are awarded and how winners are designated. Rules and points serve to encourage specific behaviors and strategies and discourage others.

The concepts can be applied to business activity to support organizational goals. It is important to note that games and gamification programs do not have to be structured to produce one winner; everyone that reaches a specified level of competence or achievement can qualify for an award (think of frequent flyer and other rewards programs – you don’t have to be the top flier to earn a free flight or other reward). Inclusive games help keep players/employees motivated after they no longer have a chance to be the overall top performer. In business, gamification is commonly used as a component of training and e-learning programs.

It is also commonly used to improve employee engagement in a variety of scenarios. The need to improve employee engagement is a leading driver behind surging enterprise use of gamification. Only 32 percent of U.S. employees are engaged at work, a level that has stagnated according to the annual Gallup poll<sup>3</sup> on employee engagement.

## How Does Gamification Relate to Contact Centers?

The effectiveness for improving engagement is a major reason why many contact centers are adopting or investigating gamification. Employee engagement is a persistent problem at contact centers, as evidenced by high employee attrition rates. Other signs that contact center agents are not engaged in their work include:

- Flat or declining sales
- High abandon rates
- Increased customer service complaints
- Increased compliance violations



Contact center operators have used gamification to improve agent engagement in general and to achieve many more specific benefits, such as improving adherence to scripts, raising closing rates for sales and collection activity, reducing risk by improving compliance with disclosure requirements, and reducing the onboarding time for new agents by making training more effective. Here are a couple common, effective use cases.

### Motivate Agents

Some people are motivated by competition, others by rewards. Either way, gamification provides several avenues to motivate contact center agents. For example, home security services provider Defenders runs frequent sales contests that are based on gamification principles and are scored using data from its interaction analytics solution.

“Structured contests give us pretty quick engagement from our team members,” says Molly Sollie, manager of quality assurance at Defenders. “We are able to provide not only rewards, but also to provide information to our call center teams to identify our best agents.” One contest that was specifically designed to improve agent engagement featured a tournament-style bracket that set up head-to-head competition.

All calls were monitored and scored by Defenders’ interaction analytics solution and points were awarded according to contest rules. The head-to-head competition coincided with the NCAA men’s basketball tournament and continued until there was a single, overall winner.

3. Gallup “The Worldwide Employee Engagement Crisis” Accessed July 11, 2016 at: <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/188033/worldwide-employee-engagement-crisis.aspx>

## Improve Performance in Specific Areas

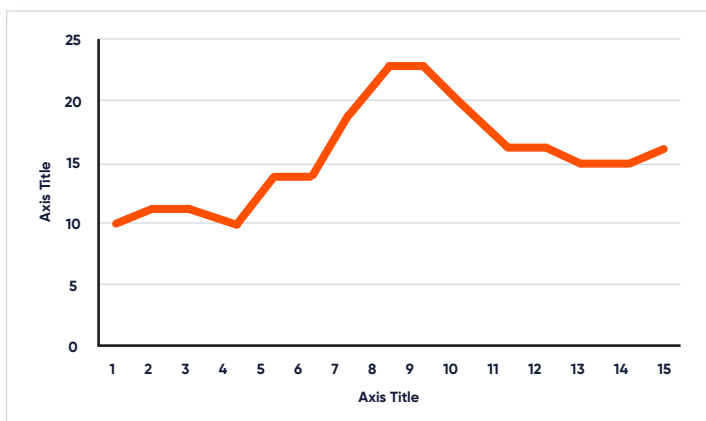
Contests can be structured so participants can earn points for a variety of activities (e.g. using a pleasant greeting, making mandatory disclosures early in the call, presenting upsell options, etc.) or to motivate a specific action.

For example, Encore Capital, a debt recovery company, identified a business need to improve how its agents began their conversations. It then identified good practices for call openings, and used interaction analytics to set metrics for them, and structured a contest accordingly.

Encore Capital reduced its hang-up calls by 15 percent in the first two weeks metrics data was available to show performance and motivate improvement. Defenders has conducted several activity-specific contests for improving performance on collections accounts (which resulted in an average increase of \$11,600 collected per week), compliance (a 4 percent increase in its compliance scores) and other activities that related directly to business goals.

Some organizations have identified a pattern to how gamification influenced agent performance. When a new contest would start, agent performance on the relevant metrics would rise and eventually plateau. Performance would decline immediately after the contest ended, but then settle at a level higher than where it began, which represents sustainable improvement.

The pattern is depicted in Figure 1. Performance scores are on the vertical axis and time is shown on the horizontal. Weeks 1 to 4 identify the baseline performance level, weeks 5 through 9 indicate the contest period, and weeks 10 onward represent the new normal.



Having accurate, objective data about results can mean the difference between success and failure with gamification programs. Proper use of metrics and data provided by interaction analytics make gamification a truly effective business tool.

Besides enabling games and contests, interaction analytics provide the visibility that contact center leaders need to continually monitor and improve operations. The following section provides more insight into how leaders are combining gamification and interaction analytics to get business results.

## Best Practices from the Leaders

One of the biggest risks to the success of a contact center gamification program is to treat it as a game. It's easy to get caught up in the creative and fun ways gamification can be applied. It's also tempting to create far-reaching contests that are intended to encourage many activities and improvements, which makes it hard to maintain focus.

Learn from a leader – Fidotrack is a pioneer and specialist in developing gamification solutions for contact centers. It has helped clients ranging from Fortune 500 companies to boutique call centers create and implement customized gamification programs. It has established a four-step process for designing programs:

1. Define goals
2. Apply interaction analytics to identify baseline performance and improvement opportunities
3. Define key performance indicators (KPIs) for the program
4. Identify the appropriate intrinsic (self driven) and extrinsic (external rewards) motivators for agents.

Successful gamification is goal oriented, not game oriented – Successful gamification programs are rooted in clear business goals. The goals should then be quantified by appropriate metrics.

Games and contests that are intended to improve employee engagement and morale will backfire if agents think goals are unrealistic or rules are unclear, so setting the right metrics is an essential step.

***Metrics not only need to motivate the desired business goals, they must be easy to understand and objectively measured (analytics can do the heavy lifting for data collection and scoring) so that employees trust the results.***

Be thoughtful about motivation – Equally important to setting the right metrics to measure goals is to find the right motivators to achieve them. FidoTrack founder and president Brett Brosseau has identified some very important differences in the best motivational tactics for different generations.

For example, he notes that baby boomers are very comfortable with and accustomed to competitions and are motivated to earn points and rewards. Millennials are more motivated by public recognition, and Generation X has its own nuances.

***One prize does not fit all – Since there is no single best way to motivate all agents, it follows that the incentives that accompany a contest should be flexible.***

While everyone likes cash, it is not the only effective incentive. Some employees may be more motivated by the opportunity to earn paid time off. There are many more incentives that have proven effective, including meals, merchandise, preferred parking spaces, banners, balloons or other recognition at the workspace, company apparel or gear, etc.

Create clear rules – While motivators and rewards can be flexible, rules, requirements and other contest parameters should be very clear and consistent. As noted, if agents think rules are unclear, or are being applied inconsistently, they may disengage from the contest.

Set time limits – A contest that goes on indefinitely will lose effectiveness. Setting a definite start and end time helps raise participation and effort while the contest is in effect.



If a long-term program is needed to meet the business goal (for example attaining a 5 percent year-over-year improvement in customer satisfaction ratings), consider conducting a series of consecutive events rather than one long one.

For example, a program intended to raise the customer satisfaction score for the year could be structured as a series of 12 monthly contests, or four quarterly ones.

***Doing so helps keep employees engaged – they may drop out of contention in one contest, but can be motivated to meet performance targets and earn incentives when the program resets.***

It is important to recognize the end of a program. Ideally the end-of-program communication will go beyond recognizing top performers and will update all participants about the results and how the program fared for meeting business goals.

Concluding with a party or briefing is also an excellent opportunity to get feedback to help make future efforts more effective. Inspire continued involvement – Contests should include mechanisms to motivate all participants to stay involved, even after they have little chance of winning the contest or meeting the minimum performance requirements.

Remember, the point of gamification is to support business goals, not to identify one employee as a winner. Another way to encourage agents to continue working toward goals is to group employees into teams, because agents may be able to achieve at the group level what they can't do individually.

Providing rewards for meeting performance thresholds is a very good way to promote continued involvement and keep participants motivated when they are not among the overall leaders. This structure makes rewards and incentives available to everyone, because "winning" doesn't require someone else to lose.

Reward thresholds can be used in combination with more competitive contests. For example, the Defenders bracket-style challenge produced a single, overall winner, but agents could continue to earn rewards after they were eliminated by meeting performance thresholds.

Communicate frequently – Maximizing the effectiveness of a gamification program requires communication before, during and after the contest.

Through consistent communication, organizations can maximize agent participation in a program, improve buy-in by helping agents understand why the goal or metric is important, avoid any confusion or hard feelings about unclear rules, and make motivation more effective by highlighting good performers. "Consistent communication is probably the most important element of a contest," says Sollie.



"Gallup sees a clear divide emerging within the engagement industry. On one end of the spectrum are scientifically and experientially validated approaches that lead to changes in individual and business performance, supported by strategic and tactical development and performance solutions that transform organizational cultures.

Though these approaches require more intentionality and investment, companies that use them are more likely to see increases in employee engagement.

At the other end of the spectrum are invalidated, unfocused annual surveys....Technology also makes it easy to create an 'employee survey' and call it an engagement program, which allows a company to fulfill an apparent organizational need and 'check a box.'"

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**Gallup Business Journal,**

"The Worldwide Employee Engagement Crisis"

[www.gallup.com/businessjournal/188033/worldwideemployee-engagement-crisis.asp](http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/188033/worldwideemployee-engagement-crisis.asp)



## Conclusion

Gamification is a fun and growing resource that can be adapted to improve contact center performance and agent engagement. While gamification is flexible, two elements are required to make it successful: clear business goals and accurate metrics.

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Interaction analytics can provide the insight and data to help set goals and measure progress against them. Interaction analytics and gamification have been used hand-in-hand in many highly successful programs. Contact CallMiner to learn more about how interaction analytics and gamification could help your organization to optimize customer engagements. CallMiner believes that resolution is the fundamental driver of positive customer experiences.

When contact center agents and others responsible for customer Conclusionengagement are empowered by insight and feedback in real-time, they can dramatically improve the rate of positive outcomes. With the tagline "Listen to Your Customers, Improve Your Business" our goal is to help companies automate the overwhelming process of extracting insight from phone calls, chats, emails and social media to dramatically improve customer service and sales, reduce the cost of service delivery, mitigate risk, and identify areas for process and product improvement. Highlighted by multiple customer achievement awards, CallMiner has consistently ranked number one in customer satisfaction.

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CallMiner is the global leader in conversation analytics to drive business performance improvement. Powered by artificial intelligence and machine learning, CallMiner delivers the industry's most comprehensive platform to analyze omnichannel customer interactions at scale, allowing organizations to interpret sentiment and identify patterns to reveal deep understanding from every conversation. By connecting the dots between insights and action, CallMiner enables companies to identify areas of opportunity to drive business improvement, growth and transformational change more effectively than ever before. CallMiner is trusted by the world's leading organizations across retail, financial services, healthcare and insurance, travel and hospitality, and more.



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