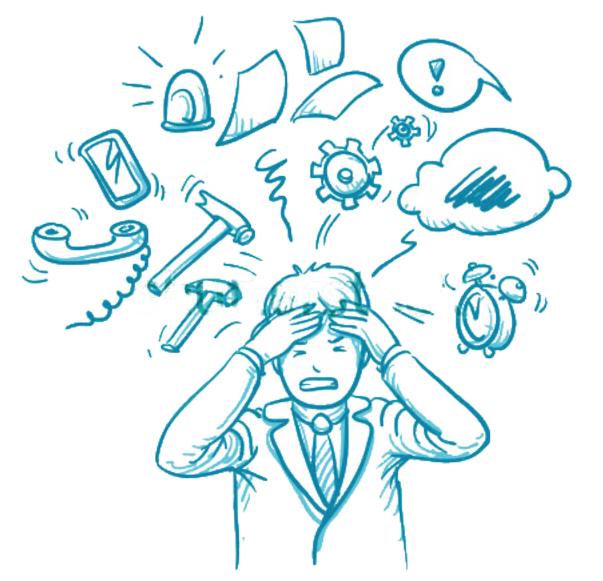# Gamifying Sales Lifecycle

The landscape of sales jobs across industries is changing rapidly. More and more people are seeking opportunities that are exciting and progressive, where fastidious inputs translate into evidently high returns. It has also become common for sales reps to work remotely, often unaware of the work culture and detached from the larger organisational goals. Such modern day nuances risk creating a work environment devoid of motivation and cohesion in the sales force.

Key Challenges / Sales – all work, no play

Sales teams need to constantly reevaluate strategies to reach out to potential customers, convert and retain them. This demands every sales rep to record all customer interactions, keeping in mind - timeliness, accuracy and quality of data. While many technology-led solutions have been developed to ease data entry and to streamline operations,

> *without motivation employees recede into old patterns.*

Moreover, embedding such hi-tech solutions into the everyday sales operations takes substantial time and effort of the managers. To boost morale, management and managers still seem to rely on traditional incentives such as leaderboards and contests. However, such

> *conventional reward systems are less likely to appease a diversified sales force, lacking relevance and attraction.*

Even in scenarios where managers are able to inspire early adoption of CRM software, over a period of time the task of data entry becomes monotonous and tedious for even the most inspired employees. Such

> *programs may become obsolete in the absence of personalisation, transparency and immediate feedback.*

Impact of Gamification / The power of play

Gamification has emerged as a key strategy to help organisations adapt to the ever changing and dispersed workforce by providing a

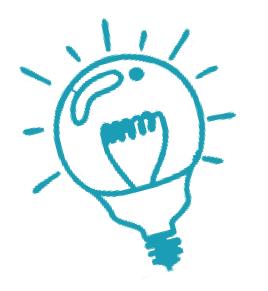> *platform to interact, incentivise, enable, and motivate employees.*

While critics have reduced gamification to a mere new-age gimmick, its roots can be tied back to the oldest sales management trick in the book - the sales contest.

Over the years, sales gamification has redefined the **application of game mechanics to motivate sales behaviour** by transforming mundane to-do lists into exciting challenges and incentivising employees to master new skills. It's a natural fit in the sales vertical, since it

> *capitalises on the ambitious side of sales teams to make business operations more efficient.*
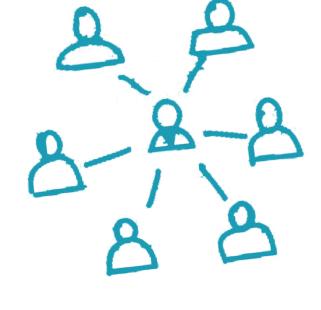
So can gamification save us (sales teams) from the monotony of modern work life? The answer is yes and no. Yes, gamification can work wonders for organisations looking to *inspire their sales force* by appealing to their *desire for entertainment*, but no it's not going to boost interest, performance or sales if it simply becomes synonymous with leaderboards and contests.

For gamification to truly add value to an organisation, enrich its culture and excite its sales force it relies on three key pillars -
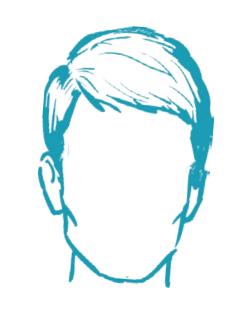
Innovation

From ideation to execution of the gamified experience, all aspects must be innovation-led. The **rewards, missions and tasks need to evolve constantly** to keep employees entertained, just as a game becomes more and more challenging as players level up. The experience of working on CRM should be so gamified that employees play all day, enjoy every minute of it, and as a result, their career would grow, they would make more money and build better connections with colleagues.

Transparency

The kind of competitiveness that's intrinsic in sales teams allows little space for collaboration, mentoring and feedback among peers. Integrating gamification into existing CRM can **bring the culture of shareability to organisations by capitalising on social interactions**. It creates opportunity for increased employee dialogue on challenges and best practices. Potentially a strong work culture can be built even among those working remotely, as employees become motivated to learn from one another.

Personalisation

In a data-rich, highly mobile and fast paced workplace, traditional incentives and training programs would fall flat. The key to successful sales gamification is **promoting meaningful behaviours that address key business objectives**. Smart CRM can enable managers to gain insight into what motivates individuals and teams, supported by robust analytics and expert reports. This helps in goal setting, evaluating performance and expediting the organisation's objectives to employees within the gamified experience.

Outcome

Over the years, organisations that have truly embraced the three pillars of gamification have redefined its application to their business processes, improving engagement, learning, productivity and yes, sales.

Gamification strategies have worked especially well for sports organisations like Kansas City Royals, by

> *creating a collaborative environment amidst competition*

to benchmark sales performance and increase data reporting accuracy. KCR accelerated its sales growth by dividing its sales force into teams. Game elements such as rankings, awards and recognition were used to engage teams, whereas dynamic leaderboards enabled sales reps to share data directly from their CRM. KCR created a fun environment by allowing each team to pick an anthem song that the whole sales force could hear every time a team crossed a milestone. These audio-visual cues motivated the reps to make more sales and display accurate data. Meanwhile, lower sales performers were able to witness the best practices of higher sales makers and their corresponding revenue, which in turn, motivated them to increase their sales. All the while, senior managers could track sales performances and provide real-time feedback to teams.

Solution

At the heart of every gamification strategy lies the goal of sustainable engagement. Indicators such as behavioural shift in employees, growing culture of collaboration amidst proliferation of healthy competition reaffirm the significance of gamification programs. However, to achieve the goals of sustainable engagement throughout the length of the program and beyond, organisations need to answer the following questions.

What is the desired action?

Any organisation looking to gamify their CRM should.

> *identify what behaviour it wants to encourage in its employees, to meet the department's target and organisational objectives*

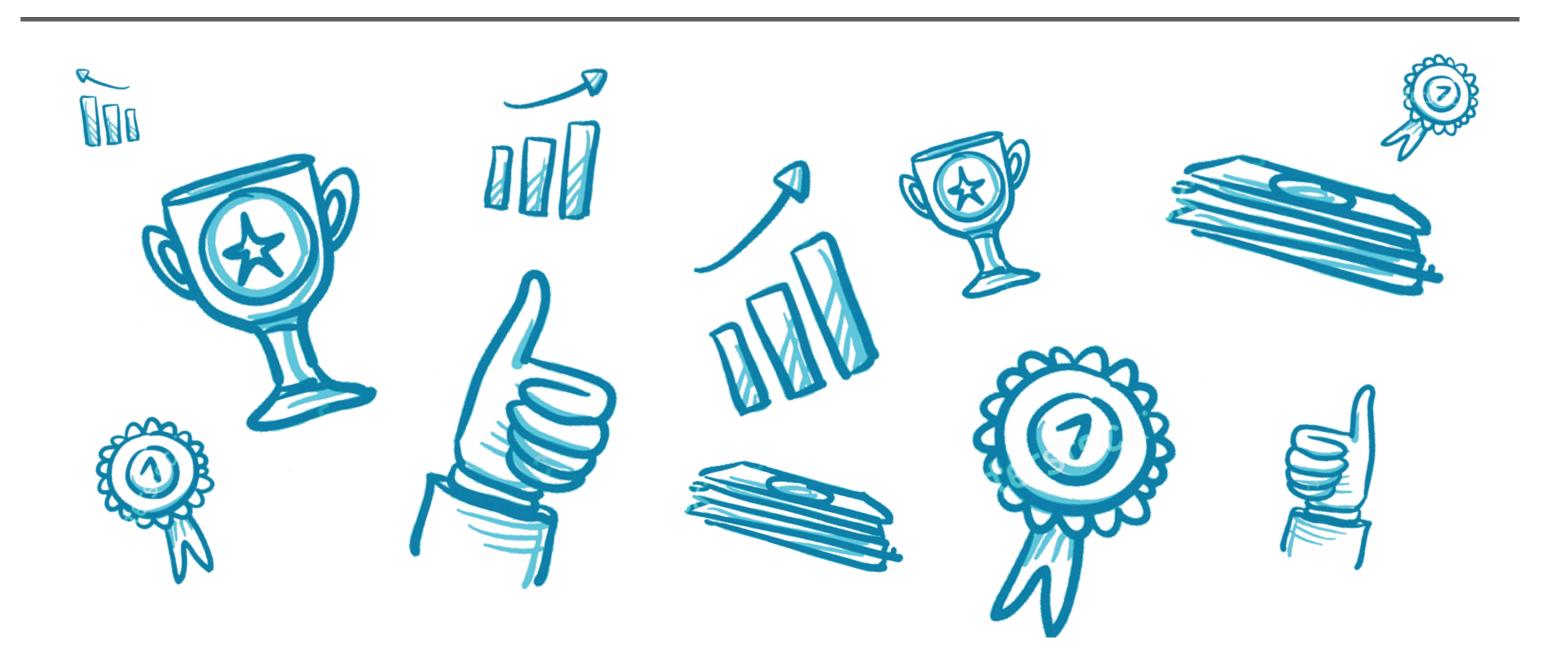By monitoring specific growth metrics, managers can identify actionable tasks that boost individual and team performances. The employee journey throughout the CRM must be intuitive and should enable ease of action. Employees should be encouraged to take up challenging tasks to earn high rewards, whereas tasks that are usually neglected should be bought to the employee's attention via automated notifications. Further, the sales force should be equipped with necessary resources like micro-tutorials, before undertaking complex or erratic tasks to bridge the gap between initial learning and retention.

What drives the employees?

The least exciting part of any game is the points, badges or leaderboards. However, sales forces can be excited by the prospects of mastery, rewarding challenges and to socialise with others. In the past, monthly contests might have allowed sales managers to tap into their reps' ambitious side. Today, managers need to

> *understand what drives better performance and what incentives motivate employees before setting goals and challenges.*

Such challenges and limitations must be optimised phase-wise to boost employee performance. If the challenges during 'on boarding' are too difficult, the employees might feel incompetent, but if the challenges during the 'endgame' are too easy it might bore the employees. In the long run, organisations need to understand and satisfy the humane need of employees, from pride to recognition to a chance to outperform their peers.

How to reward their effort?

As managers begin to understand how the sales force thinks, behaves and engages with one another, they instinctually realise that rewards reinforce positive behaviour. However, while deciding on the rewards system managers must be cautioned that not all employees care about the same things in the same manner.

> *Personalisation is the key to designing a reward system that is truly relevant to the employees.*

A well-thought out reward system directly links employees to the values of the organisation by recognising their efforts in the completion of priority tasks. Such a system must comprise of both monetary gains like, movie tickets, dinner coupons, business class upgrade, and non-monetary gratifications like awards, reputation boost and recognition by senior managers.

Conclusion

In recent years, gamification strategies have been applied across industries to engage employees, boost performance and propagate organisational values. In one too many instances, companies have become too focused on slapping badges and rewards on every little project, failing to realise the true potential of gamification.

However, when led by innovation, transparency and personalisation, gamification has created value in the organisation's operations, culture and skill of the workforce over a prolonged period. Sustainable engagement has emerged as the solution to truly excite people about working with CRM software by inducing elements of fun and thrill in it.

While gamifying the employee-facing CRM, managers must first identify specific actions they want the sales force to take. Next, managers must tap into the drives and motivations that boost employee performance. For instance, if majority of employees derive a sense of accomplishment from competing with their peers, managers must set challenging tasks to foster that spirit. Finally, managers must design a personalised rewards system to reinforce positive behaviour in employees so that they are energised to work towards the organisation's success.