

B2B Marketing Using Gamification? Really?

By Mary Sullivan

B2B marketers have been reading blogs and publications about gamification in marketing and telling themselves, "That's for consumer marketers, not for us." So is that really the case? A few reports of successful uses of game strategy in B2B marketing have surfaced, and it's worth taking a look at what, who and why.

Let's start with **WHAT**. "Gamification" refers to using game theory, which is generally applied these days to video games. [Game theory](#) in the academic sense is "the study of mathematical models of conflict and cooperation between *intelligent rational decision-makers*." It is a method for calculating where a person's best chance for success lies. Games go on to reward those who make the "best" decisions in the context of the game, whatever it may be.

Increasingly, gamification means applying game design and methods to non-game worlds: marketing, sales, training, project management, to name just a few.

Typical attributes of games are:

- Interesting and engaging
- Offering a challenge
- Rewarding good decisions and actions
- Providing recognition to successful players

There is also, by definition, an element of competition at work. It is easy to understand how gamification can apply to sales. After all, sales has been employing all of these attributes almost forever. Closing a deal is a challenge that is rewarded, and top sales people receive recognition (President's Club, etc.).

Though gamification does not necessarily rely on video, gamification does depend on technology, and almost always, Internet technology.

So you ask, **WHO** in B2B has used gamification successfully in marketing? And **WHY** did they do it (what were they aiming to accomplish)? Marketing Sherpa has published case studies that are worth our attention. I'll cite several:

- One company is a [shared services company](#) in finance, a very conservative industry, that set out to increase traffic to their website.
- The other is a [technology services company](#) that wanted to increase information sharing and collaboration between their consultants via social platforms.

Now, traditionally, B2B marketing has been working to increase website traffic, and today many of them are onboard with campaigns to develop social media content. What is interesting about these case studies is that gamification produced **extraordinary results**:

- The financial services company increased website visits by **108.5%**.
- The technology services company increased internal collaboration. And as a bonus, they **doubled** website traffic from social media platforms.

Increasing traffic to your website does not automatically generate business, but doubling website traffic certainly increases the odds of attracting new customers if you're doing everything else right.

What did they do that made a difference? In both cases, they:

- **Conducted primary research to get feedback** on the concept.
 - In the case of the financial services company, they spoke with customers.
 - The technology services company conducted a survey of their employees.
- **Developed supporting infrastructure** for the game.
 - The financial services company found a project team of developers, copywriters and testers to design and build a game.
 - The technology services company developed social profiles for each consultant and trained employees on using social platforms.
- Importantly, they **made a game that was fun and relevant to the goals of their audiences.**
 - The financial services company contacted opt-in customers via direct and e-mail, and caught additional users via PPC ads, and invited people to play "Kill the Paper Invoice" by catching invoices falling toward their character before they started piling up.
 - The technology services company made it easy for their consultants to establish a social presence, building social profiles for them, and encouraging them to write blog posts that demonstrated thought leadership.
- They **established and tracked scoring and offered rewards.**
 - The top five players in the eight-week financial services game received iPads.
 - The consultants of the technical services company were scored on inbound clicks to their blogs, and the first five received free passes to a valuable, major industry event.

What makes these cases different from more traditional B2B marketing is that these companies went out of their way to make the campaigns **engaging** and **rewarding**. Introduction of a competitive element was a lot more interesting than simply providing content that people may eventually find and read. In each case, the companies were the first in their space to implement a game-based campaign. Each company turned work into play and developed a community of interest that can continue drawing site visitors. Sounds like it's worth a try!

Mary Sullivan, a co-founder of KickStart Alliance, helps technology companies launch new products. Mary is an experienced content marketer who works from the customer perspective and leverages social networks, blogs, written and video content for inbound marketing. Want to create a game-based marketing campaign? [Contact Mary](#).