Gamification can be a powerful engagement tool

Gamification can be a powerful tool for engagement in the digital business, according to Gartner, Inc.

Brian Burke

"While people have used badges and points as motivational tools for hundreds of years, gamification can shift this motivation to a digital environment, enabling organisations to scale motivation without the constraints of cost, time, distance or connectivity," said Brian Burke, research vice president at Gartner.

Gartner defines gamification as the use of game mechanics and experience design to digitally engage and motivate people to achieve their goals. "When appropriately applied, gamification has the potential to encourage large numbers of people to change their behaviour, learn new skills or become more innovative."

Burke added that when an IT organisation becomes too risk-averse and too fixated on maintaining stability, it can lag behind business needs for innovative tools and applications that can deliver a competitive edge. "A company in the broadcast industry successfully used gamification to reduce fear of failure among its IT staff. It implemented a programme that included a portal where staff could earn badges and points for activities like sharing stories of failure and success with colleagues at lunchtime."

Gamification is most likely to succeed when individual and organisational goals are aligned. This is where gamification needs to be carefully distinguished from a rewards programme: Rewards are a way of compensating individuals for doing something they don't really want to do. When goals are not aligned, you need these tangible benefits to motivate people. But if personal and organisational goals can be brought into alignment, then the intangible rewards of gamification become relevant.

"Gamification is an important tool in the overall strategy toolkit for the digital business," said Burke. "It can motivate people to do extraordinary things."