Gamification and Employee Motivation: Evidence from a Fuel Savings Gamification Program at a Major Trucking Fleet

Ian Larkin
Anderson School of Management, UCLA

Cristian Ramirez
School of Administration, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

Abstract

There has been considerable interest in the use of gamification tools – features common in the video gaming industry such as badges, leaderboards and continuous feedback – to boost employee engagement and performance. However, there is little large-scale empirical research on the topic that allows causal inference of the effects of gamification. In this study, we present evidence of the effectiveness of a gamified platform that was introduced to drivers of a trucking company in a quasi-experimental way. The average trucking fleet driver who was exposed to a gamification platform provided by a third-party software provider designed to encourage drivers to drive more fuel efficiently reduced his use of fuel by about 15 gallons of fuel per month, at a time cost of nearly two hours of extra driving per month. Since drivers are paid by distance, not by time, this extra time was effectively uncompensated. However, the largest effect of the program came from initial announcement, before any distinct rewards were put into place (absent than “playing the game” itself), and effects quickly dissipated over time. It appears that the novelty of gamification can quickly wear off, and that introducing game-like elements that are tied to compensation can cause employees to negatively react to the “game.” Maintaining ongoing engagement in the gaming platform appears to be a significant challenge.